FAMOUS FRENCH SALONS

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Harriet Peddam's Young

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MADAME RÉCAMIER

FROM THE PAINTING BY GÉRARD

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BY

FRANK HAMEL

WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THE French *salons* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are admittedly the most renowned social gatherings that the world has ever known, and the interest which attaches to them lives and remains evergreen. It has been my aim in selecting nine of these centres of reunion to include as representative a series as possible. I have described *salon* life in the main from the standpoint of hospitality and entertainment, but it bears another aspect which it is well to keep in sight. A great deal has been written regarding the origin and history of the *salon* in all its glitter, its grace, its wit and attractiveness, whilst the deeper and more human side has been less fully exploited; and to this I wish to draw attention. The nine *salons* chosen sort themselves roughly into three classes. To the first class belong those *salons* which were produced spontaneously without special effort on the part of the hostess, either because her social position made it natural for her to entertain freely or because a combination of circumstances contributed to place her all unwittingly in the centre of a crowd. Mme. de Maintenon's *salon* is a case in point. By her marriage in early youth with Scarron she constituted herself the hostess of atheists, sceptics, epicureans, libertines and satirists;

guests with whom she was in touch by accident rather than by taste or choice. Mme. de Sévigné's receptions were the result of birth, high position, intellectuality and her love of intimate intercourse. Her intention was to surround herself with friends for the sake of the amusement, interest and sympathy they afforded her, and not because she was actuated by any more serious object. She rarely gave entertainments of a formal or semi-public character, and her circle is best described as the *salon* of friendship. The note which it struck is the keynote of her heart, her affection for her daughter and her daughter's family.

A third example of this kind of *salon* is that over which La Grande Mademoiselle presided. She had been accustomed to entertain the highest in the land from the days of her childhood, and it would have been quite impossible for her to break away from Court-etiquette, Court-surroundings and Court-crowds. The thread of personal interest running through her brilliant social successes is her unceasing endeavour to establish herself well by marriage, and the culmination of this endeavour in a tragic love affair.

To the second division belong the *salons* which were established with a particular motive or for a definite purpose, such as political or philosophical reform or regeneration of manners, literature and art. Foremost among them is that organised by the genius of Mme. de Rambouillet, who instituted the *salon bleu* for the sole purpose of combating the social barbarisms of the day and repairing the deficiencies in speech, behaviour and culture abounding at that

period. The Hôtel de Rambouillet was essentially the home of manners; it aimed at the glorification of all that was beautiful, artistic and idyllic, and was a visible protest against the rudeness and uncouthness of a previous generation. It was the model upon which many other institutions of a similar character were based.

Mme. du Deffand, too, had a purpose in building up her *salon* of wit, but it was a far less disinterested and a much more personal one. She desired above all things to discover an antidote to the terrible malady of *ennui* which had beset her in her youth and which threatened to engulf her in her old age. She deliberately set herself to attract around her an intellectual coterie of which she was to be the chief and leading spirit with her finger ever on the pulse of society in order that she might gauge the strength of her own reputation as its leader. The hour, too, was propitious. Signs were not wanting in France of the mental unrest which preceded the Revolution. Philosophic and philanthropic ideas loomed large upon the horizon and their exponents demanded a meeting place where they could hold discussions. Mme. du Deffand's *salon* was the threshold over which it was possible to step into the new regions of thought without leaving behind the old delights of wit and repartee. Mlle. de Lespinasse received her social training in this mixed mental atmosphere, and when she broke loose from it to hold a court of her own it was natural that she should devote it exclusively to the economic and scientific questions which, on account of their urgency and intensity, swayed her friends the Encyclopædists. Her intellectual

tastes and abilities eminently fitted her for the task of organising gatherings on lines of serious thought, and behind these qualities lurked the passion which later was to burst bounds and swamp both brain and heart.

The remaining three *salons* of the series belong to the third division and were held by Ninon de Lenclos, Mme. de Stael and Mme. Récamier. They arose naturally and without any prevailing object, but when they had partially run their course they changed in character and developed a more or less serious purpose. These *salons* differed fundamentally in form during their earlier and later stages. Ninon began as the charming hostess of a *salon* of gallantry, she transformed it into a *salon* of solid triumph. At first her guests were of one kind—the lover, the epicurean, the courtier or the worshipper of beauty. She was dissatisfied because her success included only half the world and she determined to conquer the other half. This was the aim which she deliberately set before herself, nor did she rest until by sheer perseverance and earnestness she had brought the whole of social Paris to her feet and had wiped out the stigma of her early notoriety.

In the case of Mme. de Stael, political events were responsible for the change in the character of her *salon* and the ambition which such events fostered acted as a motive power. Educated in her mother's drawing-room, filling a place in the great world as wife of an ambassador, it was natural that she should surround herself with a circle of friends upon whom she could lavish all that was best and brightest of her intellect and wit. But the times

were troubled, patriotism was inflaming many minds, and she was impelled to form a political centre which had for its main interest the progress of the Revolution. Disappointed ambition and the bitterness of exile marred the full measure of her social success. Mme. Récamier's *salon*, which was also founded on wealth and position, accompanied in her case by remarkable beauty, diverged upon entirely different lines. When the last quality was waning and the first had disappeared, owing to the financial upheavals of the day, she turned her attention to literature and devoted her energies to forming a circle of which Chateaubriand was the patron and his affairs the central interest. Thus she gathered around her all those who could add lustre to her particular literary star.

Such, briefly, is the meaning which underlies the glamour of the *salons*, the human interest which stirs beneath the noise and tumult of the crowd.

F. H.

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FAMOUS FRENCH SALONS

I. THE HÔTEL DE RAMBOUILLET

THE SALON OF MANNERS

"A PENCIL! paper! quick! I have found a way to build my house," cried the Marquise de Rambouillet excitedly one evening after she had spent a long and solitary hour in deep meditation. Her requirements being attended to, she rapidly sketched out a plan, and, lo and behold, so superior was it to all French architectural designs of the period that houses were built according to her ideas throughout France. Such, said Tallemant des Réaux, the delightful but too imaginative author of the *Historiettes*, was the material inception of the *salon bleu*. Its psychological origin must be sought far deeper, in causes arising from the times and manners, from a new-born taste for art, intellectuality and refinement, and from the far-sighted enterprise of the one woman who recognised that the moment had come in which to lay her finger upon the pulse of society and prescribe certain remedies for its future well-being. Needless to say, this woman was the Marquise de Rambouillet, and very earnestly and with great success did she achieve the task she set before herself, to which she offered in loving devotion all that was hers, her house, her time, her daughters, her intellect and, above all, her never-failing disinterestedness.

Considering the undoubted capacity she showed in organising a new school of culture, in obtaining not only a hearing but a large and enthusiastic following, in founding a social nucleus from which spread ever-widening circles, Mme. de Rambouillet, as a personality, remained, comparatively speaking, somewhat in the background. She was there and made her presence felt, but the part she played was rarely an active one. What is known of her is unvaryingly estimable, flawless almost to monotony, untouched by even a breath of hostility. Never the lightest word appeared in writing to defame her fair character. "We have sought in vain," said Victor Cousin, who nevertheless was impartial in his observations on the *salon bleu*, "for that which ordinarily is not wanting in any brilliant destiny, namely, some calumny or scandal, an equivocal word or the lightest epigram. We have found only a concert of warm eulogies running through several generations. As soon as the question of the Marquise de Rambouillet arises all the men of letters . . . agree in a marvellous fashion. She disarmed Tallemant himself." Tallemant des Réaux, already mentioned, was regarded as the caricaturist of the seventeenth century. He was on terms of intimate friendship with the Marquise de Rambouillet and he rarely missed the opportunity of making a point when he saw anything worthy of his irony. Although wealthy, learned and witty, his opinion had little weight among the grandees at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, because he was amongst the very few in the *salon* who were drawn from the bourgeois class and had married into a financial set. Praise from such a source was therefore held to be doubly impressive, nor did he

stint that which he meted out to his hostess. He said of her that she was beautiful, virtuous and sensible, that she loved beautiful things and was in every way a clever person, that never in the world was any one less selfish, never was a mind more upright, never was there a truer friend. "She went farther," he added, "than those who say that giving is a pleasure worthy of a king, for she said that it was a pleasure worthy of God." Segrais, who was a fellow-guest, struck much the same note in his *Memoirs*. He described her as admirable, as good, gentle, benevolent and gracious. "Her intellect," he wrote, "was sound and just. It was she who corrected the bad habits which prevailed previously. She had formed her mind by reading good Italian and Spanish books, and she taught politeness to all those of her time who frequented her house. Princesses visited her although her rank was not that of a duchess, she was also a good friend and obliged everybody."

It was left to Mme. de Motteville to point out the only quality in Mme. de Rambouillet that might be considered a failing by some. "She treated her friends, both men and women, in so frank a manner that it was impossible not to desire to please her; and those who wanted only passing amusement found it at her house—more, perhaps, because they met honourable persons there than for the pleasures of private confidence; because the crowd that surrounded her deprived her friends of the means of having it. The kindly demonstrations which she gave of her friendship flattered all those who saw her, so that each believed he had what he expected from her. Nevertheless it was said by some that she had

one defect; she was blamed for always seeking to please by her civility those who had no share in her esteem; so that those who believed they deserved it complained she appeared to give it equally to all, and to enter into the interests of everybody; in short, by seeking to have too many friends she risked having none." Surely this was a great tribute to a woman of entirely kindly character, for it implied that anything more severe would have partaken of the nature of a fabrication concerning one who was avowedly "a model of courtesy, wisdom, knowledge and sweetness".

So much may be said for Mme. de Rambouillet's characteristics; regarding her personal appearance there is no other source of information than Mlle. de Scudéry's description, under the name of Cléomire, in the *Grand Cyrus*.

"Imagine beauty in person," she wrote, "Cléomire is tall, and her figure is excellent; all the features of her face are perfect; the delicacy of her complexion cannot be expressed; the majesty of her person is worthy of admiration; and from her eyes beams I know not what fire, which imprints respect in the soul of all those who behold it. For myself I own that I have never approached Cléomire without experiencing in my heart a respectful fear, which obliges me when in her presence to think more of my actions than I do under any other circumstances. Moreover, the eyes of Cléomire are so beautiful, that it has been impossible ever to represent them well. Still they are eyes which, whilst exciting admiration, have not caused what other eyes are wont to do; for if they inspired love, they inspired always equal fear and respect and by a special privilege they have puri-

fied all the hearts they have inflamed. There is even in their brilliancy a modesty so great that it is shared by those who gaze on them, and I am strongly persuaded that there does not exist a man who ever dared to harbour a criminal design in the presence of Cléomire. Her physiognomy is the most handsome and noble I ever beheld, and there appears in her visage a tranquillity which shows clearly that of her soul . . . if Virtue took a human garb, it must be that of Cléomire."

From this verbose description, so characteristic of the stilted and flowery language of the writers of that period, we have to picture the original, for not a single portrait of the Marquise de Rambouillet is extant, although she was painted both by Ducayer and by Van Moll at different periods of her life; nor, unfortunately, was she included among the pen-portraits of Mlle. de Montpensier's *Galerie*.

Catherine de Vivonne who, whilst still a child in years, became the Marquise de Rambouillet, was the only daughter of Jean Vivonne, Marquis de Pisani and of Julia Savelli, a Roman lady of noble family. Catherine was born at Rome in 1588, and it was to her nationality as well as to her early training that she owed her taste for the beautiful in literature and art which later gave rise to the association of her name with all that was elegant and refined in Parisian society. Her marriage with Charles d'Angennes, Marquis de Rambouillet, was arranged for her when she was twelve; a doubt exists in the minds of the authorities as to whether the ceremony took place so early, but at all events it was not long delayed, for she became a mother at the age of sixteen. The marriage was in every way a suitable

and happy one, built upon reciprocal affection and unity of tastes. If the Marquis de Rambouillet achieved little himself to glorify his name, he at all events did his utmost to further his wife's popularity and establish hers. She alone founded the fame of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, was the leading spirit of the mother-*salon* and the first to discover that the essence of wit and intellectuality then coming to the fore required favourable conditions in order that its subtlety and flavour might the better be preserved. She alone arranged a suitable place with suitable surroundings in which the process of distillation could proceed to the best advantage. Her ideas about house-building were Southern. She arranged for the erection of the stairway at the side of the house, and at the end of the courtyard, instead of in the centre of the building, thus obtaining greater space for a large suite of rooms, instead of dividing them off, as had previously been the fashion, with the hall on one side of the steps and bedrooms on the other. The apartments themselves were very spacious, beautifully arranged and decorated, the floors were raised, and long broad windows opening to the ground and opposite one another ensured, if desired, a free entrance to light and air. All that art could devise was utilised in perfecting the new mansion which has been fully described by Sauval in his *Antiquités de la Ville de Paris*, and which stood on the site of the Hôtel Pisani, in the Rue St. Thomas-du-Louvre, a property included in Mme. de Rambouillet's marriage-dower. The beautiful gardens, overlooked as they were by the windows of the reception rooms, extended as far as the Carrousel and the Tuileries. No palace could

have been better fitted for the purpose to which it was consecrated than the beautiful residence which its owner offered as a shrine to the Muses, the manners, the letters and the graces. The holy of holies itself, called the *salon bleu*, by virtue of its colour-scheme, was a spacious apartment looking across the garden to the Tuileries. Here in this "sanctuary of the Temple of Athena" Mme. de Rambouillet received the continual homage which for thirty years a crowd of friends bestowed upon her. Some curious physical dislike or infirmity caused the Marquise to shun the full sunlight, or any obtrusive heat, hence her room was never garish and the blue silken curtains, toning with blue and gold upholstery, threw a delightful half-light. Blue was a pleasant innovation, for hitherto tan-colour and red had been in vogue for decorating rooms. The chamber was divided up by screens to facilitate the formation of intimate and confidential groups, so that on first entering it was sometimes difficult to see the number of guests actually present. In the innermost *alcôve* lay Mme. de Rambouillet herself, receiving in her *ruelle* two or three among the most honoured. La Grande Mademoiselle in the *Histoire de la Princesse de Paphlagonie*, written in 1659, has admirably described the scene of the *salon bleu* as it appeared in its later days. She thought Mme. de Rambouillet "adorable," and wrote: "I think that I can see her now in that shadowy recess—which the sun never entered though the place was never left in darkness—surrounded by great crystal vases full of beautiful spring flowers which were made to bloom at all seasons in the gardens near her temple, so that she might look upon the things that she

loved. Around her were the pictures of her friends and the looks that she gave them called down blessings on the absent. There were many books on the tables in her alcove, and, as one may imagine, they treated of nothing common. Only two, or at most three persons were permitted to enter that place at the same time, because confusion displeased her and noise was adverse to the goddess whose voice was loud only in wrath. Our goddess was never angry. She was gentleness itself."

At the age of twenty Mme. de Rambouillet forsook the pleasures of the Louvre and carried out the project which had undoubtedly been simmering for some time in her thoughts, of creating a social circle on lines entirely different to anything she had seen or experienced since her arrival in the French capital. Henri IV. was on the throne, the Court was avowedly coarse and corrupt, even among the nobles brutish habits and semi-barbarism were the rule, and the women of the period were rough, ill-mannered, given to beating their servants, or indeed any one who happened to displease them, quarrelling amongst themselves, and rejoicing in a licence of speech and ribbald jesting which were not limited to use among those of their own sex only. The time was ripe for strong reaction and the regenerating influence was born not a moment too soon. Having once studied the requirements of the case, Mme. de Rambouillet took the next step of introducing reform, but many years passed before she was able to make any marked and permanent improvement in the existing condition of things. She began by drawing up an entirely new code of behaviour, of manners, and of speech, and she encouraged the intellectual

appreciation of beauty, and the study of language and letters. Those who chose to conform to her ideas and work them out to the utmost of their abilities were termed *précieux* and *précieuses*. The expression became a catchword and whatever disrepute it may have fallen into on account of the exaggerated caricature of the original type which grew out of it, originally the meaning of the word was neither more nor less than "*personnes de prix*," literally "persons of distinguished merit". This fact was emphasised by Molière himself when he called his skit, dealing with the over-inflated *culte*, *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, for the qualifying adjective would otherwise have been superfluous.

Perhaps the honour of putting in a few and simple words the origin and significance of the *précieux* movement belongs rightly to Victor Cousin. The Hôtel de Rambouillet, he wrote in his *Youth of Madame de Longueville*, was "a choice reunion where the most exquisite politeness is cultivated, but where, little by little, the *genre précieux* enters and acquires full control.

"And what was this *genre précieux?*

"It was at first simply what is now called the style *distingué*. Distinction is what was sought above all things at the Hôtel de Rambouillet: whoever possessed it or aspired to it, from princes and princesses of the blood to lettered persons of the most humble fortune, was well received, attracted to, retained in the amiable and illustrious company."

Two things almost always enter into distinction, continued Cousin, two things in appearance conflicting, and which only combine in choice spirits happily cultivated; these things are a certain elevation in

ideas and sentiments added to an extreme simplicity in manners and language. It was precisely the loss of the second condition and the undue inflation of the former which brought the whole *culte* into ridicule —but that was not until Mme. de Rambouillet had lived her day. Her life was a protest not only against the vileness and rudeness to be found at Court but also against the invasion of foreign elements which tended towards degrading the classical beauty of the French language, French literature and French art. For the first time the leaders of society were to join hands with men of letters in a general attack on an unwelcome invasion, and all who wished to escape corruption turned of one accord to a source which promised, if not fulfilment of the ideal, at least filtration and rehabilitation of the real. It was in this amalgamation of courtiers and men of letters that the strength and at the same time the weakness of the *salon bleu* lay: strength because whilst courtiers profited in instruction and amusement from the men of letters, the latter obtained polish and good manners from the courtiers; weakness because the rift between two widely divergent classes could not fail to diminish somewhat the utility of the common aim to which they were devoted.

Rœderer named the Hôtel de Rambouillet "the cradle of the reform in manners"; the more restless and corrupt the court, said he, the more select and *recherché* the *salon bleu*, and so different was the tone of one to the other that "cloister and world could not have remained more distinct". "To be admitted there was to those of mediocre position a hallmark which raised them in the general estimation," wrote Petit in his *Life of the Duc de Montausier*.

"The great flocked there in search of that noble simplicity and that honest liberty which seemed to have been banished from the King's palace. The savant found there that exquisite and delicate taste which is the whole reward of science and without which science offers nothing that is not repellent. Women learnt that their sex did not debar them from taking part in fine letters." Fléchier expressed himself in the same strain. "Do you remember," he said on 2nd January, 1672, in his funeral sermon on Mme. de Montausier, "the *salons* which are still regarded with so much veneration, where the spirit was purified, where virtue was revered under the name of the incomparable Arthénice; where persons of the highest merit and quality assembled and composed a select court, numerous without confusion, modest without constraint, learned without pride, polished without affectation."

On the whole these eulogies seem to have been well deserved, and the wonder is not that the deterioration in quality and tone of the *genre précieux* came so soon, but that it did not come sooner. The society of the *salon bleu* was formed towards the end of the reign of Henri IV., the first period of the celebrity of these reunions lasted from 1610 to 1620. For twenty succeeding years they were an absolute power in Paris and not until 1645 did the decline commence. During the years preceding the Fronde, Mme. de Rambouillet lost her hold on society and by the time that mimic war actually took place her fame was departing. Louis XIV. was then to inaugurate the glory of his own court and would brook no social rivalry. The period was a long one for any one woman to hold undisputed sway of all that was most

exquisite in the high life of the gay capital. Of her five daughters three were useless to her from the social point of view—they were *religieuses*, two at the Abbaye d'Yères, one at Saint-Etienne—but she was admirably supported by the two others, Julie and Angélique. These three women formed a kind of divine social trinity. They were models to be followed by the highest in the land, to receive the homage of all the world, to inspire noble thoughts, noble language, noble verse, noble deeds in those who were privileged to approach the shrine of beauty, and offer their sincere reverence and humble devotion upon the altar of friendship. In these matter-of-fact, practical days such a position seems almost impossible or at all events distinctly exaggerated, but in courtly France at a time when it became the fashion to believe that women were created to be adored, to be sung in madrigals, to be addressed in the high-flown language of hyperbole, in fact to be placed upon a flower-decked pedestal of grace and virtue, it was not only possible but was the natural outcome of the general trend of ideas.

Of all the *salons* of old France there is none other which possesses the glamour, the colouring, the individuality, the beauty and picturesqueness of that held at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. All the rest in comparison seem brilliant but vulgar crowds. There may have been others equally famed for wit, equally frequented by beauty, almost as fashionable, quite as gay, but when compared with the parent of them all it is obvious at a glance that an indefinable something is lacking in each; something that was never realised elsewhere, never even approached, which would indeed have seemed out of place except in the *salon bleu*.

JULIE D'ANGENNES—MADEMOISELLE DE RAMBOUILLET

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY A. LALAUZE

It may have been a poetical touch, a spiritual savour emanating from the rare souls that inaugurated the reunions and casting an effulgence over the grosser elements attracted round them, or perhaps, to be less intangible, it was the pure gold of preciosity in its first untarnished flow from the crucible in which the society of sixteenth-century France had been seething.

Motley material composed this harmonious whole; learned ladies hobnobbed with prelates, magistrates with poets, young exquisites with hack-writers, princesses with military men, acknowledged beauties with wrinkled savants; yet all of them possessed a common factor, their pretensions or aspirations to education, refinement, polish, culture and wit; and, if these were assumed for the occasion, it was with such good will that a spirit of *camaraderie* prevailed at least during the hours spent at the house of Mme. de Rambouillet.

Among the very first visitors who appeared in the *salon bleu* were Malherbe and his favourite pupil, the Marquis de Racan. Malherbe was one of Mme. de Rambouillet's most faithful adherents until his death in 1628. He did much to instil into her ready mind a love of noble and grave verse, and to him she owed her name of Arthénice by which she was always known, and which was an anagram upon Catherine. The fact that she bore it was regarded as one of the first signs of an affectation which later became general.

Malherbe was regarded as a great lover of correctness, and it was said of him that until the hour of his death he made a supreme effort to maintain the purity of the French language. The story was told of him that when actually on his death-bed and lying in a deep stupor he roused himself with difficulty to

reprove the nurse who was waiting on him for using a word which, according to his idea, was not good French. The priest who was present reprimanded him for giving way to anger at a moment when he should have been making his peace with God. "Alas, it was unavoidable," he replied, not without regret, "the study of my mother-tongue has invariably been my first care!"

Malherbe introduced his nephew, Eléazar de Sarcilly to Mme. de Rambouillet, and the young man, who was handsome and gallant, had so much success with the ladies of the *salon bleu* that he aroused considerable jealousy. His uncle, however, was suave enough until some one encroached upon his own particular province of poetry. M. Desyvéteaux said of him that he "demanded alms, sonnet in hand," and assuredly he was greedy enough to brook no rivalry. He found his match in Marini, the brilliant Italian who wrote a stupendous poem of 45,000 verses called *Adonis*, and who attracted not only the women at the Hôtel de Rambouillet but of the whole of Paris. They named him "Marin" and applauded his high-flown sentiments, especially when he called the rose "the eye of the springtide". His influence on the *salon bleu* was far-reaching but not always beneficial.

Contemporary with these men was Ogier de Gombauld, the author of *Endymion*, who was always in pecuniary difficulties. One of those members who were charged with revising the judgment of the Academy on the *Cid*, he had been amongst the little group of nine men of letters who met at the house of Conrart for the purpose of discussing the language and literature of the day, and who formed the nucleus

of the French Academy. Five out of the nine frequented Mme. de Rambouillet's *salon*, the four others, besides De Gombauld, being Godeau, Chapelain, Claude de Malleville and Conrart himself. It was said that the latter, being a prosperous financier, was the only one who had sufficient accommodation in his dwelling to hold the meetings. Jean Desmarets, Racan and Colletet early joined the ranks of the Academicians and the guests of the *salon bleu*. Balzac, Vaugelas and Voiture were admitted to the Academy in 1634, and in the following year Letters Patent were granted for its legal establishment at the instigation of Richelieu, who received the idea from his favourite, secretary and literary *protégé*, Boisrobert, friend of Colletet and Conrart. Boisrobert was one of the first members, and because he had great influence he allowed several persons to pass into the ranks and receive pensions, although they said nothing, spoke badly and perhaps did not even write at all. They were called facetiously "les enfants de la pitié de Boisrobert".

It was with difficulty that Letters Patent were obtained for the Academy, and when *Parlement* was especially called for the purpose an outcry arose, and opinions were expressed that to assemble *Parlement* for so trivial a matter was equivalent to convening the Roman Senate to determine what kind of sauce was to be prepared for the Emperor with a certain dish of fish. But at length the earnest body of men who had the welfare of their language and literature at heart were given a legal standing, and Conrart was appointed first Perpetual Secretary of the new Academy. Conrart was essentially a self-educated man, and in his childhood had not been allowed to

study either Latin or Greek. Later, however, he enjoyed the reputation of possessing an inexhaustible fund of knowledge, and to him were referred all the debated questions which arose at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, where everything was discussed that had previously been put before the Academicians themselves. Such questions covered every kind of lingual dispute from the spelling or pronunciation of a word to the correct sentiment expressed in a madrigal.

If Conrart was regarded as the learned authority of Mme. de Rambouillet's circle, Voiture was the life and soul of the party, and it was his business to provide the less serious-minded guests with gaiety and laughter. He fulfilled this duty admirably and unfailingly. Voiture was the son of a wine merchant, but it was said of him by his friend, M. de Chaudebonne, that he had too much wit to remain among the lower classes and enough fortune to associate with his social superiors, and for this reason he introduced him into the intimate circle of the Hôtel de Rambouillet and stood sponsor for him in his "regeneration". Voiture speedily became the darling of the ladies. No one knew better how to make himself interesting, languishing, joyous and playful. Mme. de Sévigné called him "libre, badin, charmant". Mme. de Motteville said he "had wit and by the charm of his conversation he was the amusement of the *ruelles* of those ladies who made it their boast to receive the best company". Tallemant blamed him for keeping up a "perpetual *tintamarre* when at the Hôtel," but added that he was really amusing when he was not in love. It was Voiture's own boast that "he had made love from the sceptre to the sheep-hook and from the coronet to the round-ear'd cap". In the

salon bleu he divided his attentions between Mlle. Paulet, "*la lionne*," who was a very important factor among the feminine section of the Rambouillet society, and Mlle. de Rambouillet, to both of whom he wrote a number of letters. One day when giving his hand to the latter he made a movement as though about to kiss her arm. She was very much annoyed and he was forbidden ever again to think of taking such a liberty. He no longer cared for her after this incident but offered his devotions to her younger sister instead. Considering the studied refinement of the society in which he moved, he was allowed a good deal of licence, but his jokes and free speeches passed muster because it was "only Voiture," and the strongest remonstrance when he overstepped the unwritten code was a mild "Qu'y a-t-il donc là de beau? Trouvez-vous cela gai?" The young Condé, then still Duc d'Enghien, went so far as to excuse his *faux pas* on account of his extraction. "Were he one of us," he said, "this man would be insufferable!" Nevertheless he invariably had the support of the ladies, and his facile habit of turning verses sustained his popularity. All he wrote was light, pleasing, fanciful but frequently puerile. He was the kind of man who, although of mature years, is always regarded as a boy. It was said of him that he was "tiresome because he did not know how to grow old".

A good description of Voiture is found in a letter which he himself indited to an unknown mistress. "Lest you should deceive yourself," he wrote, "in fancying me a tall, fair fellow, and be surprised at the sight of me, I care not for once if I venture to send you my picture. My stature is two or three inches below the average; my head appears hand-

some enough and is decently furnished with a crop of grey hair; then I have eyes that languish a little, yet are somewhat distraught; I have a somewhat dull cast of countenance, but as a recompense one of your friends will tell you that I am the best boy in the world." It is easy to picture the self-assured yet apparently unassuming little man standing in the centre of a laughing, chattering group. Suddenly he would be asked to recite some verses and at a sign from his hostess a hush fell upon those present. All eyes were turned upon him, and his own were veiled, his laughing face would suddenly become serious, his attitude betoken sadness. The recitation consisted of pathetic little verses with a sudden turn at the last to humour, and the laughter and chatter would begin afresh, mingling with the burst of appreciation and applause. Voiture was indeed among the privileged, and when he was rash enough to introduce into Mme. de Rambouillet's private room a bear-leader with his beasts which showed their ugly muzzles above her screen and frightened her considerably, she willingly forgave him; but sometimes he did not escape so easily, and the following account of his punishment tends to show the kind of pranks which took place sometimes in the Rambouillet society.

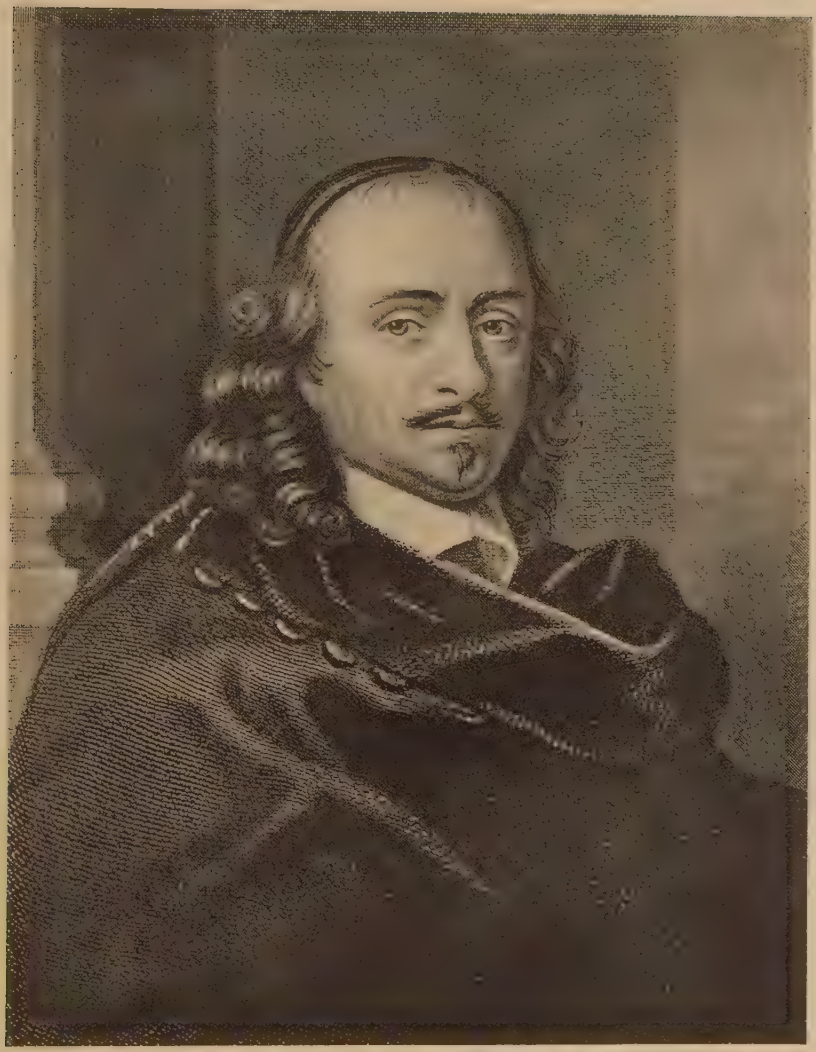
"Last Friday in the afternoon," he wrote to Mlle. de Bourbon, "I was tossed in a blanket because I had not made you laugh in the time that was given me; Mme. de Rambouillet pronounced the sentence, at the request of her daughter, and Mademoiselle Paulet. . . . 'Twas in vain to cry out and make resistance, the blanket was brought and four of the lustiest fellows they could get were

picked out for this service. I may venture to affirm to you, Madam, that no man was ever yet in so exalted a condition as I was, and I did not believe that fortune would ever have raised me so high; at every toss they threw me out of sight, and sent me higher than a soaring eagle." Then after a poetic description of his sufferings, he concluded: "I beseech you then, Madam, in the first place to declare this an outrage you by no means approve, and for reparation of my honour and my strength to order a great canopy of gauze to be set up for me in the blue chamber of the House of Rambouillet where I shall be waited on and magnificently entertained for a whole week by the two ladies who were the cause of this misfortune; that at one corner of the room they shall be continually making sweetmeats; one of them shall blow the fire and the other shall do nothing else but put syrup upon plates to cool and bring it me as often as I have occasion".

Owing to the fact that his fortunes were bound up to some extent with those of Monsieur, Gaston, Duc d'Orleans, Voiture was frequently away from Paris. In 1632 he went to Spain, from whence he travelled to England and Belgium, returning to Paris in 1635. He left the French capital again in 1638, returning there finally in 1642, to remain until 1648, when his death occurred.

Whereas Voiture represented the lighter side of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, Corneille was the base upon which its literary solidity was founded. Uncouth as he was in manner, ill at ease amidst the cultured crowd, there was nothing imposing in his personal appearance, nothing in his behaviour to inspire confidence in the greatness of his work. La

Bruyère said of him: "he is simple, timid and—when he talks—a bore; he mistakes one word for another, and considers his plays good or bad in proportion to the money he gains by them. He does not know how to recite poetry, and he cannot read his own writing." It was true that Corneille read his own plays in the *salon bleu* so badly that no one knew whether they deserved applause, and that after hearing *Polyeucte* the society showed no enthusiasm, and Voiture was deputed to persuade the author against its production. But when one of the younger men, the Abbé Bossuet, for instance, with his sonorous voice and inspired mien, repeated the verses which Corneille in his hesitating, raucous voice, and bourgeois manner had made so meaningless, a change was observed at once; every one became enthusiastic and reverenced the beauty of what they heard. The author of the *Cid* was almost at the height of his fame, and as yet Racine and the new school had not arisen to separate his followers into rival forces. It was Montesquieu who compared Corneille to the Michael Angelo, and Racine to the Raphael of poetry. La Bruyère said: "Corneille enthrals us by his characters and ideas; Racine's coincide with ours; the one represents men as they ought to be, the other as they are. . . . The one seems to imitate Sophocles, the other Euripides." The rivalry that existed between Racine and Corneille was augmented through the action of Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans, who requested that they should both compose a piece on the subject of *Bérénice*, with the result that Racine gained the favour of all who heard his work, many being moved to tears by its obvious beauty. From that day Racine came more to the



CORNEILLE

AFTER A PORTRAIT BY C. LEBRUN

fore as Corneille receded into the background. Racine was handsome and possessed a charm of manner which gave him the advantage over his rival. He was, however, too much engrossed in his work to cultivate a reputation as wit or conversationalist and was still quite a child when the Rambouillet society was at its height. La Rochefoucauld's maxim, "It displays a great poverty of mind to possess only one kind of genius," was, it is said, pointed particularly at Racine and at his friend Boileau, who were thoroughly acquainted with nothing but poetry. The latter wrote a criticism of Racine's ode *La Renommée aux Muses* which resulted in a steady friendship between the two, and he aimed his *Traits Satiriques* against the *precieuse* movement and the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Mme. de Sévigné said of Boileau "that he was only cruel in verse," and he himself declared that his conversation "had neither claws nor nails". He was the youngest of three brothers *â sang critique*, of whom the eldest, Gilles Boileau, was a frequent visitor at the *salon bleu* where he was known by the *nom de Parnasse* of Bracamon. The more famous writer did not call himself Boileau but Despréaux until the death of his elder brother in 1669, and he was still known as Despréaux until about 1700. Mme. de Maintenon, who had no particular friendship for him, used this name at his death in 1711, when she wrote curtly, "The satirist Despréaux is dead". Her dislike arose through his well-known *brusquerie*. Once when questioned in her presence by Louis XIV. who asked him to name the greatest dramatic poet of France, he replied with great want of tact, "Sire, it is Molière; all the others wrote farces, like those

wretched pieces of Scarron's". Mme. de Maintenon never learnt to appreciate references to the husband of her youth, and strongly resented criticism.

A mutual friend of Racine and Boileau was Bourdaloue, the well-known preacher who always commanded a hearing and whose sermons were greatly appreciated by Mme. de Sévigné. In conjunction with Bossuet, he advised Louis XIV. earnestly to separate from Mme. de Montespan. Another preacher whose efforts in the same direction were sincere but misplaced was Bishop Fléchier who, when the Court passed through Nismes and lodged at the episcopal palace, rubbed out Mme. de Montespan's name which was written on the door of the room destined for her use. The King being informed of this complained to Fléchier saying, "You are not gallant, there are people who have a right to complain of you". "That is so, sire," replied the bishop, "the finest man in his kingdom has a right to object to what I have done, but on my side I have the eldest son of the Church." Fortunately Fléchier was a great favourite with Louis, who when he appointed him to the episcopate said: "I have made you wait for what was your due long ago; but I could not deprive myself of the pleasure of hearing you preach". Fléchier was appointed a member of the French Academy on the same day as Racine, but was so modest in the face of his abilities that before he died he took the precaution of having a plain stone erected over his own grave lest his heirs should choose an elaborate monument. His remarks on the Hôtel de Rambouillet have already been quoted.

A third well-known preacher, also a member of the French Academy and of the *salon bleu*, was the Abbé

Cotin, who for a time was in great vogue, being consulted, flattered, befriended and cajoled by the fairest, noblest and wittiest ladies in France. He was described as "un Abbé pédant et petit-maître," and, owing to his taste for quips and sonnets, called himself the father of French epigram. His days of prosperity did not last, however. He was eventually deserted by his friends because he appeared ridiculous.

Jacques Esprit was a member of the French Academy, and he and two of his brothers had the *entrée* to the *salon bleu.* Furetière, the Academician, was another guest, and Père Rapin, Bouhours, La Fontaine and La Bruyère. The latter wrote somewhat scathingly of the Hôtel de Rambouillet and the *précieuses.* "Not long since," he said, "certain persons of both sexes formed a society for intellectual conversation and interchange of ideas. They left to the vulgar herd the art of talking intelligibly; an expression used by them, and which was not very clear, was followed by another still more obscure, which was improved on by others still more enigmatic, which were always crowned with prolonged applause, so that at last, by what they were pleased to call refinements, sentiments, turn and delicacy of expression, they succeeded in becoming unintelligible to others and to themselves. Common sense, judgment, memory, or the smallest capacity were unnecessary in their conversation; all that was wanted was a certain amount of intellect, and that not of the right sort, but of a spurious kind, and in which imagination was too prominent."

La Fontaine was of a very different stamp and less scornful of the foibles of preciosity. He was preoccupied, careless, idle, lovable and gracious, full of originalities and essentially and fundamentally French.

It was said of him that he possessed the most easy-going disposition in the world and that he was inattentive even in the best of company, for his mind was for ever running on his own verses or others by his favourite authors. A story was told about him by the younger Racine which was intended to emphasise his extreme unconcern. La Fontaine was but an indifferent and neglectful husband, and his friends, Racine and Boileau, persuaded him to become reconciled to his wife from whom he lived apart. Influenced by their suggestions, he rose one morning very early, quite contrary to his usual custom, and journeyed to Château-Thiery, where she had been living. On reaching the place he was told that his wife was dead. He returned to Paris immediately and informed his friends that he had taken their advice and visited his wife, but that he could not see her because she had gone to heaven. This was the man who was credited with showing the fidelity but the impartiality of a dog's affection. Mme. de la Sablière, having dismissed all her visitors one day, declared that she had only kept her three animals, her dog, her cat, and La Fontaine. She was equally frank with him in his presence. "En vérité, mon cher la Fontaine," she said to him another time, "vous serez bien bête, si vous n'aviez pas tant d'esprit."

When it is remembered that in the *salons* of a later day it was considered a fine thing to possess amongst the guests a single academician, it can easily be imagined that great lustre was shed by a group of men as brilliant as those already mentioned. Besides these every one else of note was to be found there. "It was a resort not only for the fine wits but for every one who frequented the court," wrote

Mme. de Motteville, and Saint-Simon declared it to be "a sort of academy of *beaux esprits*, of gallantry, of virtue and of science, for these things accorded marvellously. It was a rendezvous of all that was most distinguished in condition and in merit; a tribunal with which it was necessary to count, and whose decisions upon the conduct and reputation of people of the Court and the world had great weight."

To gain admission into this select circle was undoubtedly a greatly coveted distinction, for, as Mme. de Sévigné declared, "the Hôtel de Rambouillet was the Louvre". The Ducs de Beaufort, de Vendôme, de Nemours, de Bouillon, de Châtillon were to be seen there; as were also the Princesse de Condé, the Princesse Palatine, of whom Cardinal de Retz said she "was as fond of gallantry as she was of solid business"; the Duchesses de Chevreuse, de Nemours, de Montbazon, d'Aiguillon, the Comtesses de Fiesque and de Frontenac in the train of La Grande Mademoiselle; Saint-Pavin and the Abbé Montreuil, Maréchal d'Hocquincourt and the great Barillon, successor to Colbert, of whom the story is told by Mme. de Sévigné that he said to Mme. de Coulanges: "Madame, your house pleases me; I shall come here every evening when I am tired of my family". "Ah, sir," replied Mme. de Coulanges, "I shall expect you to-morrow." Mme. de la Fayette belonged to the *salon bleu* early in life, and deserted it later to assemble her friends at her own house. Mme. de Cornuel, famed for her *bon mots*, was a wasp among the bees and was recognised in *précieuse* circles by her sting.

Only a Mme. de Rambouillet could weld into

one whole the diverse human elements gathered from the Court, the city, the writing-table, the study, the bench, the barracks and the drawing-room, and train them to enjoy the illusive delights of pastoral festivity, mould their rugged inequalities, smooth uneven characteristics, trim ragged edges, polish rough surfaces, rub away angles and throw the glamour of poetry over the dull exterior of everyday happenings. And what freakish natures were amongst those of her guests! Colletet, for instance, the clever drunkard who married his servants in turn and yet was not ostracised; Godeau, as diminutive in his person as in his verses, of whom Mlle. de Rambouillet wrote to Voiture: "There is a man here now who is a head shorter than you are, and who is, I swear to you, a thousand times more gallant". He was called Julie's dwarf, and he sang, he rhymed, he cracked jokes and drank with the German students who flocked to study in his rooms. He was always in love, but was a bishop and a good bishop who "entrapped all the successes," and of whom Sainte-Beuve said, "withal he remained the foppish spark of all that world".

George de Scudéry and his wife were there too; the former swelling with conceit engendered of the praise received on account of his sister's writings, which appeared under his name. He advertised his own glory, his tragic comedies and his extraordinary fancies, such as collecting expensive tulip bulbs. Vaugelas, the unfortunate, never showed to advantage, was invariably pursued by ill-chance and believed anything that was told him. He usually sat with drooping head and half-open mouth, and now and again he was overtaken by a kind of nerve-paroxysm. Yet Mme. de Rambouillet sympathised with him in

his ill-luck, and when he was set to teach the deaf and dumb son of Mme. de Carignan, she declared : " What a pity that a man who speaks so well and who can teach so admirably how others should speak, should be tutor to a deaf-mute ".

Another extraordinary member of the *salon bleu* who in spite of his atrocious verse was suffered if not gladly, at least amicably, was Neufgermain, the mad poet, who in 1630 published a volume called *Les Poésies et Rencontres du Sieur Deneufgermain, poëte hérétoclite de Monsieur, frère unique du Roy.* As an example of his productions the following may be cited from the volume, for it had been suggested to him that he should make a verse ending in the syllables of the names of his protectors, a fashion then in vogue :—

Entre les dieux doit tenir RANG
Proche Jupin, au plus haut BOUT
Plus belle que rose et L'ŒILLET
La divine de RAMBOUILLET.

The book was signed by many of the *habitués* of the *salon bleu*, headed by the Marquis de Rambouillet himself, followed by Chavaroche, *intendant* of the house, who turned easy verses and made himself conspicuous by fighting a duel with Voiture in the garden of the Hôtel with which the name of the younger Mlle. de Rambouillet was concerned ; also by Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, author of *Clovis* and of *Mirame*, who contributed to the *Guirlande*, by the Comte de Brion, Gaston d'Orleans himself, the Chevalier du Bueil, Boissat, gentleman-in-waiting to Gaston and one of the first members of the French Academy, and Patrix, the friend of Voiture, of whom Scarron facetiously wrote :—

Patrix
Quoique Normand, homme de prix.

Scarron frequented the Hôtel de Rambouillet about 1630, at the same time as Rotrou, Charleval, Patru, Benserade and Costar; Balzac, although he had previously corresponded with Mme. de Rambouillet, did not visit her until later in the thirties. Costar was not only a friend of Balzac but of Ménage and Voiture. His *Défense des Œuvres de M. de Voiture* caused no small stir when it appeared, but in spite of the fact that he talked and wrote well and had original ideas, his style was so stilted and ornate that Scarron prayed he might rather be faulty or inaccurate, and the Comtesse de la Suze who met him frequently in the *salon bleu* called him the most gallant of pedants and the most pedantic of gallants.

Benserade, whose *nom de Parnasse* was Berodate, was a member of the French Academy, and at one of the meetings he made an enemy of Furetière. Having seated himself in the latter's place, he remarked loud enough to be overheard by him: "Here is the spot from which I am entitled to make many foolish statements". "Proceed," replied Furetière, "you are beginning very well." Benserade came into open rivalry with Voiture, for a literary quarrel arose on account of their respective sonnets, "Job" and "Uranie". The former was said to eclipse the latter, but Mme. de Longueville, who whilst she openly admired Corneille had a secret *penchant* for Voiture, influenced the followers of Benserade to throw up their allegiance and come over to the side of the admirers of "Uranie". She used all her powers of persuasion, which were great, upon the guests at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, who

supported Voiture in a body. It was her true *rôle* to shine as a beauty and to repudiate the reputation she had gained for *bel esprit*. She took little part in the pastimes carried on among the *précieuses*, such as verse-making and play-acting, nor did she pose as an authority on the suppression of old words and the coining of new, the desirability of omitting a superfluous "s" or transforming the "u" into "v". As Anne de Bourbon she captivated everybody with whom she came into touch. She was betrothed to the Prince de Joinville, who died, and later to the Duc de Beaufort, but she married the Duc de Longueville. She had beautiful blue eyes, light hair, a fine figure, a careless and languishing air, and, according to Cardinal de Retz, she would have had "but few faults if gallantry had not given her many". La Rochefoucauld, whom the Cardinal declared to be "the most polished man of the world," was one of her lovers, and the Duc de Nemours and the Comte de Coligny were killed in duels on her behalf. It was said of her that she seduced "le sage Turenne" to the side of the Frondeurs, and when she retired to a convent after the death of her husband and son, Mme. de Sévigné called her "that penitent and saint-like princess," saying wittily that "une pénitence de vingt-sept ans est un beau champ pour conduire une si belle âme au ciel". But in the days of the *salon bleu* she was at the height of her popularity, and Victor Cousin said of her in *La Jeunesse de Madame de Longueville* that she was formed exactly by the bent of her mind and character to become an accomplished pupil of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. "There was in her an innate depth of pride, which slumbered in

ordinary life, but, at intervals, was promptly aroused. Her mind was of the finest stamp, but its delicacy often turned to subtlety. Especially the tender, platonic gallantry, which was the order of the day, was calculated to charm without causing her fear, for her rank protected her; and besides, she says in the most humble of confessions, the pleasures of sense never attracted her. What touched her and ended in misleading her, was a desire to be loved and also the wish to show the power of her mind and of her eyes."

Mme. de Longueville's mother and her brother, the Duc d'Enghien, later Prince de Condé, were *habitués* of the *salon bleu.* The latter had the family *hauteur*, but none of his sister's delicacy. The easy manner of the soldier was always his, and he carried freedom of thought and language as far as licence. He was well made but not remarkably handsome, his eyes were keen, his nose aquiline, his hair usually disordered; he had an animated appearance, an eagle glance, and he exhibited a gaiety which no danger could quell. He was in love with Mlle. du Vigean whom he met constantly at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and he was an enthusiastic admirer of Corneille, a faithful defender of Molière and a friend of Bossuet. The latter made an early and striking entrance into the *salon bleu.* At one of the gatherings there, the Marquis de Feuquières, who knew his father at Metz, happened to discuss the young man's remarkable powers of oratory, and declared that although he was only sixteen he was able to discourse on any subject whatever, if only he were given ten minutes in which to prepare. Mme. and Mlle. Rambouillet

immediately begged Feuquières to fetch Bossuet from his college, so that he might give them proof of his gift. It was already late in the evening, but no time was lost. Bossuet was sent for, and before eleven o'clock had delivered a sermon of real merit. At the close of the speech Voiture congratulated the youthful speaker and declared he had never heard a sermon preached so early nor so late.

Ménage and Chapelain were among the leading lights of the *salon bleu* in the earlier days, the former being renowned for his able discussion of foreign verses. His nature was ardent and poetic, and he complained that there was only gallantry and no love to be found at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. His chief failing was egregious vanity, but he was possessed of knowledge of a particular kind which made him sought after in the society of the *précieuses*. When he was fifty he went round to all the fine ladies of his acquaintance to take leave of them, saying he was about to put aside affairs of the heart for ever. Such a declaration, however, was quite uncalled for, since his gallantries had never been known to give any of the French ladies *mal à la tête*. Chapelain was also regarded as an authority in his own particular subjects. He was learned in Italian and Spanish letters, was a critic whose judgments were not to be despised, but whose verse was declared to be as "shabby as his clothes, becoming respectable when they were mended". He read some fragments from his *Pucelle* in the *salon bleu*, but this poem brought him but little fame. Although in moderately easy circumstances he was described as "one of the shabbiest, dirtiest, most shambling and rumpled of

gallows-birds, and one of the most affectedly literary characters from head to heels who ever set foot in a drawing-room". He had been known to appear before Mme. de Rambouillet in a coat of dove-coloured satin cut in the fashion of a previous generation, lined with green plush, trimmed with narrow green braid, and with net in the place of lace, wearing eccentric boots which did not pair, an old wig and a faded hat. In time the influence of his surroundings made itself felt upon his dress, which whilst always old became less slovenly. It must not be forgotten that these were the days when the young courtiers vied one with the other as to who could wear the widest ribbons, the plumiest feathers, the gayest colours, the richest silks, and the most handsome mantles. The latter they cast in knightly fashion at the feet of the ladies with whom they wished to converse, and thus, gazing up into expressive eyes, they turned madrigals, declaimed poems, cracked jokes and whispered of platonic love. Amongst these popinjays, Chapelain and such-like men of letters looked odd and unkempt indeed, but in spite of this the poet received the friendship and respect he merited for his modesty, frankness, delicacy and refinement of feeling. One of his more celebrated compositions was "La Récit de la Lionne" which he wrote for Angélique Paulet, who was called "*la lionne*" on account of her mane of chestnut hair and her fearless glance. She was the daughter of Charles Paulet, one of Henri IV.'s secretaries, who invented the tax known as *la Paulette*. She was brought into undue prominence through the passion entertained for her by the King when she was still very

young, but the untimely death of Henri was timely for her, for it saved her from too obvious notoriety. She was early befriended by Mme. de Rambouillet who regarded her as "a bit of driftwood," dragged her perforce from dangerous proclivities, enabled her to perform a period of chastening seclusion, absolved her from the stigma of frailty in the eyes of the world, and reinstated her in society, where she was valued and beloved. Her great gift was song, and so entrancing was her voice that a story was current of two nightingales which were said to have died of mortification and jealousy on the border of a fountain where she had previously been singing to an admiring group of her fellow-guests.

In 1629, when Mairet's *Sophonisbe* was received with an *éclat* which had only been surpassed by that accorded to Corneille's *Cid*, Mme. de Rambouillet welcomed the young poet among her intimates, and arranged that his famous tragedy should be represented at her house. Her daughter Julie played the title-rôle, the Abbé Arnauld that of Scipio. Mlle. Paulet, attired in the costume of a nymph, chanted to her own accompaniment on the *théorbe*, an instrument on which she performed beautifully. She appeared between the acts with such success that all present declared the harmonies of her voice far exceeded in beauty the strains of the violins which were usually heard during the intervals.

Mlle. Paulet was eminently fitted by nature to enter thoroughly into the spirit of the entertainments and festivities which were carried on at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. "It was the fashion," said Tallemant, "to give oneself over to plays which exercised the

mind and the imagination in these *précieuse* and gallant circles. One found therein occasion to be brilliant and to unveil one's sentiments by allusions at once ingenious and delicate; *bel esprit* was thus associated with *bel amour.*" Authors brought the manuscripts of their plays and poems to read to the company and expected to hear the free criticism, appreciation or disapproval of all present. Literary games were in great vogue; for instance, one in which a certain number of words was given to each player from which he or she composed a story, a letter or a poem; in another each person by the drawing of lots was apportioned some task, such as the making of a sonnet, a madrigal or a rondeau; a third consisted in sustaining both sides of an argument on any given subject. But the meetings were not restricted to purely intellectual amusement. Dancing, picnics, pastoral plays, *fêtes* with fireworks and music, and diversions of every kind were indulged in so long as they might be considered poetic, innocent or idyllic. Romping and practical jokes were not entirely eliminated, and some of the latter, though harmless enough, were not particularly refined. The Comte de Guiche, later Maréchal de Grammont, was an excellent butt for a certain style of humour dear to the *précieuse.* One day at dinner dish after dish was served to him of viands which were his special aversion. Now the Comte de Guiche was a gourmand, and when he saw that he was likely to get nothing at all to eat his face fell and he looked somewhat reproachfully at his hostess. The latter burst into laughter and said jocularly to her *intendant:* "M. de Guiche is not getting what he likes. Serve something else." The affair had been arranged beforehand, and when the joke had

gone far enough, a *menu* of entirely different courses was offered him. Another time he indulged rather freely in mushrooms. During the night his clothes were stolen and the seams sewn up so that he had great difficulty in getting into them when dressing next morning. "How bloated you are," said M. de Chaudebonne on seeing him, and others made similar remarks, expressing themselves in different degrees of horror. The poor Comte de Guiche hastened to a mirror and on seeing his figure cried out, "Ah, it is a fact! I must have been poisoned by the mushrooms." There was a general stampede in search of remedies, but at length M. de Chaudebonne brought a written formula which he declared he had seen used with unfailing success. He handed it to the victim, and the latter, unfolding the paper, read, "Recipe: get a good pair of scissors and slit up your coat". The Comte de Guiche laughed as heartily as any one. He was completely cured.

Cospeau, Bishop of Nantes, who belonged to the more serious section of Mme. de Rambouillet's society, was the hero of a story, rather more in keeping with the general principles of the *précieuse* amusements. It is related by Tallemant. A court no less crowded, no less joyous, than that in town was held by the Marquise at her country estate of Rambouillet. Cospeau, whose indulgent character, easy wit, prompt repartee and gentle manners endeared him to everybody, was staying at the château at the same time as a number of young girls, friends of Mlle. de Rambouillet. Mme. de Rambouillet took a walk with him in the vast grounds, and at length they arrived at a spot where a circle of huge stones was grouped among large trees. When they came close

enough to the boulders of rock to see them distinctly through the foliage, the preacher thought he caught sight of something "je ne sais quoi de brillant". The Marquise, however, appeared to notice nothing, although her companion declared he could discern the figures of women attired as nymphs. She still denied that anything was to be seen but the glistening rocks which were usually there; but at length, when they were quite near, they discovered Mlle. de Rambouillet and all the young ladies of the house most effectively clothed as nymphs, who, seated each on a boulder, made the prettiest picture imaginable. The good Cospeau was so charmed, said Tallemant, that whenever he saw the Marquise afterwards he always mentioned the beauty of the rocks of Rambouillet.

A more general surprise was organised by Mme. de Rambouillet when she had a pavilion built secretly at the side of the Hôtel in an enclosed part of the garden. Nobody had suspected the existence of this *annexe* until one evening when the *salon bleu* was filled with guests and a door was opened in one of the walls which had been draped with tapestry. Mlle. de Rambouillet, superbly dressed, appeared in the entrance to the new apartment which was immediately named by Chapelain "la loge de Zyrphée".

Such fantasies were to some extent the outcome of the literary influences of the day. The *précieuses* were imbued with the spirit of D'Urfé's *Astrée*, a pastoral allegory of great length, dealing with the delights of chaste affection, and aptly described as the platonic dream of a disillusioned lover; of La Calprenède's romances, worthy of their fiery and impetuous Gascon author, whose right hand when not employing the pen was ever itching for the sword; of Racan

telling the story of his woes in his sentimental *Bergeries* and of Mlle. de Scudéry, across the pages of whose voluminous novels there stalked the heroes of antiquity, discoursing in a style of high-flown pedantic gallantry elsewhere unequalled. To read *Clélie* or the *Grand Cyrus* was a serious undertaking. Many months of constant application were required to complete the perusal of the ten or twelve volumes of which these works consisted. Lady Russell wrote of the former that "the wise folk say it is the most improving book that can be read". The author was considered quite an authority on the tender passion, though Bayle pointed out that "much as she wrote of love she had never experienced it, and as she was never married it was possible to remark on this without giving offence". In *Clélie* Mlle. Scudéry drew up a chart of "Tenderland," and described how the three cities of Tender were situated on three rivers, Tender on the River Inclination, Tender on the River Esteem, and Tender on the River Recognisance. Inclination ran a very rapid course and there were no villages on its banks. Esteem meandered past such small places as *Billet-Doux*, *Billet-Galant*, *Jolis-vers*, till it came to the towns of Great-Heart, Honesty, Generosity, Respect, Exactness and finally Goodness which was not far from the City of Tender. The third river Recognisance wound along through the hamlets of Complaisance, Submission, *Petit-soins*, Assiduity, to the towns of *Empressment* and Sensibility, and thus to the great city, arriving at last at the desired port which of course was Marriage, or, to use the language of the *précieuses*, "l'amour permis". But woe to the traveller who was not lucky enough to escape the Lake of

Indifference, the Sea of Enmity, where shipwreck occurred, or the *Mer Dangereuse*, so called because it was dangerous for a woman to exceed the limits of friendship.

It was all very silly and very sentimental, and it is not surprising to find that it gave rise among these extraordinary people to a new vocabulary so distinct and far-fetched that it formed a complete language and was set forth by Somaize in his *Dictionnaire des Précieuses*. In that work we find that when people desired a servant to snuff a candle, they said, "Inutille [Laquais] otez le superflu de cet ardent," that they called a glass of water "un bain interieur," music "le paradis des oreilles," the breeze "l'amant des fleurs," a seat "le commodité de la conversation," and the play "les meslanges des vices et des vertus". "Ma chère," "ma précieuse," "mon illustre," were expressions used in the place of Christian names which were banished from the conversation entirely, or replaced by a *nom de Parnasse*. Voiture was known as Valère, Balzac as Belisandre, Mme. de Sévigné as Sophronie, Mlle. de Scudéry as Sophie though she called herself Sappho, Ménage as Menander, Godeau as La Mage de Tendre, Pellisson as Acante, Sarrasin as Sésostris, Chapelain as Crisante, and so forth; the more extravagant the trope, the more its originator was extolled and applauded. From commencing harmlessly in the *salon bleu*, the jargon spread to other circles, reappearing in a more or less virulent form at the gatherings held by the Duchesse d'Orleans, by Mademoiselle, by the Duchesse de Longueville, and even at those of Mme. de Coulanges, Mme. de la Fayette, and in a very modified degree of Mme. de Sévigné.

La Rochefoucauld is supposed to have referred to this society jargon in his maxim, "Il y a des folies qui se prennent comme les maladies contagieuses". Mlle. de Scudéry was perhaps the worst offender of all, and at her *soirées* the conversation was an exaggerated version of the original Rambouillet pattern. She herself was typical of the *précieuse pedante*, and was backed up in this attitude by her most intimate friends. Among them were Pellisson, of whom it was said, "qu'il abusait de la permission d'être laid," Sarrasin who was welcomed for his clever repartee, in spite of his absurd appearance and a proclivity for making foolish marriages, Godeau, Chapelain and Conrart, who presented her with a crystal seal accompanied by a madrigal as an incentive to the others to emulate his poetical offering, which they promptly did, addressing verses even more insipid and gallant to the illustrious Sappho and Mme. d'Aligre. This day of presentation was named "La Journée des Madrigaux," and rhyming-lunacy was rampant. Molière described such outbursts as the "mischievous pastimes of vacant minds, romances, verses, songs, sonnets, lays and lies". The great dramatist was more at home in the gay world of Ninon and of Mme. de la Sablière than at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, but when he went there he made good use of his time in gathering notes on the *précieuse* movement, which he used later with much effect in his scathing comedy.

The whole Rambouillet family, with the exception of M. and Mme. de Montausier, were present at the first representation of *Les Précieuses Ridicules* which took place on 18th November, 1659, at the Petit Bourbon. "Mlle. de Rambouillet was there,

Mme. de Grignan,"[1] wrote Ménage in *Ménagiana*, "all the Hôtel de Rambouillet, M. Chapelain and several others that I knew. The piece was played to general applause. I was so satisfied with it myself that I saw at once what effect it would produce. At the end of the comedy, taking M. Chapelain by the hand, I said to him, 'Sir, you and I can approve of the follies which are so finely criticised and with such good sense, but believe me, as S. Remi said to Clovis, it is necessary to burn that which we have adored, and adore that which we have burnt'. That came to pass as I foresaw, and since this first representation they cast aside rhodomontade and stilted style."

Three years before Molière composed his play, Saint-Évremond, who was a constant guest in the *salon bleu*, had written a satire on the *précieuses* called "Le Cercle". If it was not quite so comic as the more famous work, it was without doubt more true to life in its representation of the various shades of preciosity, the sentimental, the subtle, the platonic or the dogmatic:—

Dans un lieu plus secret, on tient la précieuse
Occupée aux leçons de morale amoureuse,
Lá se font distinguer les fiertés des rigueurs,
Les dédains des mépris, les tourments des langueurs;
On y sait démêler la crainte et les alarmes;
Discerner les attraits, les appas, et les charmes:
On y parle du temps que forme le désir;
(Mouvement incertain de peine et de plaisir:)
Des premiers maux d'amour on connaît la naissance;
On a de leurs progrès une entière science;
Et toujours on ajuste à l'ordre des douleurs
Et le temps de la plainte, et la saison des pleurs

—which forms a fitting last word on the *genre précieux*.

[1] The Comte de Grignan's first wife.

But no account of the Hôtel de Rambouillet could be complete unless it made special mention of the Duc de Montausier, one of its most steadfast supporters, who was responsible for the production of the *Guirlande de Julie*, a piece of literature which may be regarded as symbolical of the *salon bleu*.

Charles de Sainte-Maure, when Marquis de Salles, aspired first to the hand of Julie d'Angennes in 1631, and for fourteen years persevered in his suit until 1645, when as Duc de Montausier he claimed the reward of his patient fidelity and made her his wife.

Born in 1610, of an ancient family of Touraine, Montausier early distinguished himself in military life, and at the age of twenty-eight became Maréchal-de-camp and afterwards Governor of Alsace. His elder brother had also desired to marry Mlle. de Rambouillet, but prophesied his own death during a campaign in Italy and foretold that his younger brother would achieve the happiness debarred to himself. Both events came to pass, the Marquis de Salles becoming head of his house. During the long years Julie remained obdurate, declaring she never intended to marry, refusing to leave her mother and pleading as an excuse that Montausier was a Protestant. Her lover, however, persevered in spite of all obstacles and in 1641 produced the *Guirlande* above referred to. Tallemant described it as one of the most illustrious gallantries which had ever been offered to any mistress. The gift consisted of a number of madrigals composed by the poets of Mme. de Rambouillet's circle, combined with paintings on vellum of the twenty-nine flowers which formed the garland, executed by the artist Robert. An appropriate set of verses faced each flower, and the whole

was bound in red Levant morocco. Nicolas Jarry wrote the manuscript and made three copies of it, and the original passed into the hands of the Duchesse de Crussol d'Uzès.

The most interesting point in connection with the *Guirlande* was the record of its contributors who, without exception, were *habitués* of the *salon bleu.* In all they numbered nineteen, Chapelain, Colletet and Corneille; Godeau, De Gombauld and Desmarets; neither Racan nor Conrart as was suggested by some authorities, but the Marquis de Rambouillet, Martin, better known as Pinchesne, Malleville, Scudéry, Montausier himself, with the lion's share of sixteen madrigals, Arnauld d'Andilly, *père et fils;* Arnauld de Briotte and Arnauld de Corbeville, Habert de Montmart, Habert of the *Artillerie*, the Abbé de Cérisy and Tallemant des Réaux.

The marriage ceremony between the Duc de Montausier and Julie took place at Rueil in 1645 and was performed by Godeau. It marked the epoch when the society of the *salon bleu* was about to decline in importance and when preciosity commenced its downward path. The married pair remained at the Hôtel de Rambouillet for two years, but early in 1648 Montausier quarrelled with several of those who took part in the Fronde against royal authority, and a serious breach occurred between him and both Condé and the Duchesse de Longueville. Voiture's death in the same year caused an appreciable gap, and shortly after her marriage Julie quarrelled with the Marquise de Sablé who was offended because she was not invited to the wedding, and their friendship was never again what it had been in the early days when, introduced by her father, the Maréchal de Souvré, she

had believed there could be no greater felicity on earth than to spend her life with Julie. Madeleine de Souvré, later Marquise de Sablé, was a very interesting and beautiful woman who was intensely imbued with the spirit of the time and of a strong enough personality to influence others. Her loss made another break in the intimate circle. Above all, the Fronde caused general separation of old friends according to the interests which attached them to opposing parties. Montausier was obliged to remain in his Province at Saintonge. He returned to Paris to find the ranks thinning. Mlle. Paulet was dead, Descartes died in 1650, and Sarrasin and Balzac four years later. The Marquise de Rambouillet was weak and ailing. She was separated from her daughters, had lost her son in warfare, and her husband died early in 1652. Chapelain, Cotin, Ménage, Vaugelas and the Scudérys were constant visitors, the Montausiers were sometimes there, and the De Grignans rarely, but the Hôtel de Rambouillet was no longer famed for its *salon bleu*, it was only the residence of an old, tired woman, often alone, sad and decrepit, whose death in 1665 put an end to the lingering hours of the *salon's* decaying brilliancy.

Mme. de Rambouillet was buried in the Church of the Carmelites de Faubourg Saint Jacques, and Tallemant wrote her epitaph :—

> Ci-gist la divine Arthénice
> Qui fut l'illustre protectrice
> Des arts que les neuf sœurs inspirent aux humain.

She was a noble and clever woman who inspired sufficient respect to silence even the lowest murmurings of calumny, and opened the way to social gatherings of a new order.

II. LA GRANDE MADEMOISELLE

THE SALON OF THE COURT

"I DO not know what it is to be anything *but* a heroine! I am of birth so high that no matter what I might do, I never could be anything but great and noble. And they may call it what they like, *I* call it following my inclination and taking my own road. I was born to take no other!" These characteristic words were uttered by La Grande Mademoiselle in a reply to a reproof from her father, Gaston, Duc d'Orleans, who cajoled, commanded, rebuked or betrayed his daughter as the whim took him, but never succeeded in quelling her proud spirit. That was untameable and was engendered of her royalty and the fact that she regarded herself as removed from all companionship save that of kings and queens. She possessed no object in life save to exalt the honour of her house, and incidentally to establish herself by making the highest alliance possible. This was the aim which never left her thoughts, the motive which was the mainspring of her actions, and the ambition which proved at length to be the stumbling-block over which she came to bitter grief.

Her childhood and early youth were given up to gaiety and entertainment. Nothing more serious than balls, collations, plays and functions of every kind disturbed her days. Then came the most brilliant period of her life, when, as a young and elig-

ible woman she shone at Court in the full glory of her rank. The Fronde followed and gave her the opportunity of throwing herself into a whirl of intrigue and excitement; enamoured as she was of meretricious grandeur, seeking false glory, she enjoyed to the utmost the clash of arms and the worship of fighting men. Afterwards she suffered exile, a slow recovery from her indiscretion and the long struggle to regain the King's favour which cooled her hot-headedness. Recalled to Court in 1657, the early sixties saw her established in the Luxembourg, holding her *salon*, entertaining the nobility, still intriguing for a marriage and approaching her downfall and the *affaire Lauzun* which lamentably clipped her pride once and for all. Brilliant as she was, imperious, unyielding, she possessed at the same time some quality, be it impetuosity or inconstancy, which proved her own undoing. Mme. de Motteville touched upon it when she wrote: "Mademoiselle, with much intelligence, ideas, capacity, and great desires for the closed crown, never knew how to say a yes to her own advantage. Her own sentiments and wishes were always superseded within her by passing fancies; and what she most wanted she did not accept when she might have had it." And again: "Mademoiselle has always spoilt her affairs by the excitability of her temperament, which makes her go too fast and too far in all she undertakes; whereas if she had been more moderate in her conduct things would, perhaps, have succeeded much better for her". Sainte-Beuve explained the same weakness when he said that she was behind the times by the ten years of her age more than the King's, that is to say, "un peu arriérée et de la vieille cour". "Elle brûlait,"

he declared, "comme Didon, comme Médée, comme Ariane, mais vingt ans trop tard." Moreover she did not adapt herself to the changes which took place at Court after the Regency, and when Louis XIV. was becoming more and more self-assertive. "As she was at ten, so she was at twenty, at thirty and all her life," continued Sainte-Beuve, who nevertheless regarded her as the most original, the most singular and the most natural figure of the seventeenth century.

La Grande Mademoiselle was so called on account of her tall stature, her haughty attitude, her warlike mien and lofty bearing. Her mother was a mild, fair, beautiful personage, as sweet and gentle as the girl's father was weak-willed and neurotic. Gaston, brother of Louis XIII. and of Henrietta-Maria, Queen of England, was for many years looked upon as the heir-apparent to the throne of France. When he married Mlle. de Montpensier he became Duc d'Orleans and de Chartres and Comte de Blois. "Monsieur" was best known for his excessive uncertainty in every relation of life, for his keen and ofttimes spiteful repartee, and for the collection of herbs which he cultivated in his garden at the Castle of Blois. Anne Marie Louise d'Orleans, Mlle. Montpensier, his daughter, was born on 29th May, 1627, and within a week of that date her mother died, leaving her the richest heiress in Europe. She was installed with royal magnificence at the Tuileries, and from her babyhood was surrounded by an army of serving men and women, by squires, courtiers and valets. Her governess was the Marquise de Saint-Georges, who died in 1642, and was replaced by the Comtesse de Fiesque. But Mademoiselle studied

little, and her days and nights were devoted to festivities, even before she reached the age of nine, when she retired for a few months to a convent, there to be thought intolerable by all in authority. She was far more at home ruling those around her or amusing herself with her faithful dwarf Ursule Matton than in conforming to the regulations and complying with the restrictions imposed upon the dwellers in a nunnery. As a mere child she entertained right royally, and it was her boast that those who arranged her affairs gave her a house and an equipage "much grander than any daughter of France had ever had". In 1637 she made a journey through France, and when describing the delight of her travels in her *Memoirs* said that she "swam in joy". On her return to the capital she resumed her ordinary gay life, which for a girl of ten was certainly remarkable. "I passed the winter in Paris as I had passed my other winters," she wrote. "Twice a week I went to the assemblies given by Madame the Comtesse de Soissons at the Hôtel de Brissac. At these assemblies the usual diversions were comedies [*i.e.* plays] and dancing. I was very fond of dancing, and for my sake they danced there very often." Assemblies were also held by the Queen, by Richelieu and by others, at which favourite plays were usually performed, and Mademoiselle was not at all behindhand in giving receptions herself at the Tuileries. Some of these entertainments are reported in the *Gazette* in 1636: "The night of the 23rd and 24th of January, Mademoiselle in her lodgings at the Tuileries gave a comedy and a ball to the Queen, where the good grace of this princess in the dawn of her life gave proof of what her noontide is to be.

The 24th of February, Monsieur gave a comedy and a collation to His Royal Highness of Parma at Mademoiselle his daughter's, in her apartments at the Tuileries," and so forth.

Thus from her early childhood she was accustomed to play hostess to a brilliant crowd, to receive adulation, inspire respect and charm society. But her manners were those of the day, rude, abrupt, uncultured and domineering. Individually she added to the general want of polish, a want of tact, of grace, of judgment, in short of all the softer feelings, whilst to the somewhat masculine attributes of a loud voice, awkward gestures and a vocabulary more varied than refined, she brought unassailable virtue, a sense of honour, and a certain broad-mindedness where her emotions were not involved. The very training-school she was most in need of was at her service, and in the *salon bleu* at the Hôtel de Rambouillet she discarded her *gaucheries*, became docile, veiled the sparkle of her eyes and silenced the twang of her ofttimes angry tongue; and if these much-to-be-desired effects were only transitory no one expected that the waywardness of so august a princess could be perpetually beneath the curb. At all events she owed much to the gentle surroundings and cultured atmosphere enjoyed by the pioneers of the *précieuse* movement, and was doubtless grateful for the opportunity of receiving benefit from their society and of living up to the *nom de Parnasse* of "Princesse Cassandane," under which she appears in the *Dictionnaire des Précieuses.*

Louis XIII. died in the spring of 1643, and this was the first event which made the least break in the society life enjoyed by La Grande Made-

ANNE OF AUSTRIA

FROM A MINIATURE IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM

MADEMOISELLE DE MONTPENSIER
("LA GRANDE MADEMOISELLE")

FROM A MINIATURE BY PETITOT

moiselle. The actual mourning for the late King did not defer the social gatherings then in vogue, for she wrote in her *Memoirs*, "They danced everywhere and especially at my house, although it was not at all according to decorum to hear violins in a room draped with mourning," but the coming of the Regency put a new complexion on things, and Mademoiselle herself began to turn from her frivolous amusements and think seriously of marriage projects. Although such ideas had already taken root in her mind they were now to fully occupy her time, for she found that no one else was prepared to take the necessary interest in an affair which she considered of pre-eminent importance, and she decided to act entirely on her own account.

Her father was occupied with his attentions to his second wife, the Queen-Mother was apathetic, the death of the Comte de Soissons, her destined husband, in 1641, left room for a worthier aspirant to her hand, and though she had been led to believe that she would some day share the throne of her boy-cousin, Louis XIV., the latter was little more than an infant, and it was too early to take any steps which might render any such arrangement definite. There was the Cardinal-Infant, brother of Anne of Austria, Captain-General of Flanders, Archbishop of Toledo, who also died in November, 1641, upon whom she had cast longing glances; the Prince of Wales was in Paris, but his fortunes appeared uncertain; Philippe IV. and the Emperor Ferdinand III. both became widowers between 1644 and 1646, and failing the latter there was the Archduke Leopold, his brother, to whom she sent her personal messenger, Saujon, for the purpose of opening negotiations.

This little move on her part was brought to nought, and Mazarin imprisoned her chosen delegate, whilst she herself was requested to retire to the privacy of her own apartments, where for ten days she was virtually a prisoner. During this period, seeing all her intrigues useless, she contemplated withdrawing to a convent, a resolution which naturally broke down when she discovered that, although for a time her energies had been misspent, there were still fresh fields in which to beat up possible claimants to the honour of espousing her. Among those she considered not ineligible were the King of Hungary, the Prince of Lorraine, Louis XIV. and his brother, the little Monsieur, a weak-kneed youth who revelled in dressing up as a girl. Her designs upon Condé were born of the part he was to play in the Fronde, but his wife, ailing and feeble as she was, declined to set out for the next world—an event which alone would have made it possible to carry them out.

Meanwhile Mademoiselle's position in society was solidified by her appearance at the representation of *Orpheus* on the afternoon of 8th March, 1647 (not 1646 as given in her *Memoirs*), followed by a ball, at which the Queen herself had superintended her gown and her coiffure. "They were three whole days," she wrote, "arranging my costume: my dress was covered with diamonds and trimmed with carnation, white and black tufts; I wore all the jewels of the crown and those of the Queen of England, who at this time still possessed a few. No one could have been more magnificently attired than I was on that occasion, and there were plenty of people to assure me that my beautiful figure, my imposing

mien, my fair complexion and the brightness of my blonde hair became me more than all the riches with which my person was adorned." The *fête* was in every way a triumph for Mademoiselle, and the poor Prince of Wales who shyly ventured on some clumsy advances seemed to her only worthy of being pitied and treated *de haut en bas*, for his fortunes were distinctly problematical and it had meanwhile been borne in upon her that she was destined to marry at least an emperor.

In the following year her personal intrigues were merged in the wider interests awakened by the outbreak of the Fronde, the political juggling which lasted four years, and in which many of the leaders changed sides. It took its name from the children's game of pelting the patrol *à coup de fronde* and gave rise to much childish folly. Those of the Opposition were called the Frondeurs, and the name became a catchword, everything being *à la Fronde*. Condé besieged Paris for the Royalists and then seceded to the Opposition; his brother Conti, who was a violent enemy of Mazarin, ended by marrying his niece. Turenne who opposed Condé at Saint-Antoine took part later against the Royalist cause. Even Gaston wobbled between the parties, giving his consent to the arrest of Condé, Conti and the Duc de Longueville, of whom he said, "There is a fine netful caught; a lion, a monkey, and a fox," whilst the following year he himself assisted in releasing them from prison.

The part that La Grande Mademoiselle played in the mimic civil war was as much to the credit of her spirit of heroism as it was to the discredit of her good sense and judgment. She was in a romantic

mood, and the smoke of the battlefield and boom of big guns seemed the very accompaniments she required to carry out with *éclat* the game of bluff she was contemplating. If it was her intention to force Louis XIV. to marry her, the very prominence in which she placed herself was a mistake, but it may be regarded as certain that Mademoiselle knew as little as most of her countrymen and women what the outcome of the disturbances was likely to be. She threw herself heart and soul into an affair which promised diversion and in which partisans of both sexes played equally important *rôles*. Mme. de Longueville, the Princesse de Condé and Mademoiselle herself were charged with military commands, and under their orders other ladies of quality were enrolled as *aides-de-camp*. In her *Memoirs*, Mademoiselle mentions the receipt of a letter from her father, addressed, "À mesdames les comtesses maréchales de camp dans l'armée de ma fille contre le Mazarin," these ladies being the Comtesses de Fiesque and de Frontenac. She had also her corps of couriers who brought her the latest news from the capital. Lightness, gaiety and folly reigned in the camps where women played at war and men played at love whilst fretting at inaction. A temporary respite came with the conclusion of the peace negotiations of Rueil on 11th March, 1649, and on 8th April Mademoiselle returned to the Tuileries amidst the general applause. "When I returned to my home," she wrote in her *Memoirs*, "everybody came to see me, great and small, and for the three days I was in Paris my house was never empty." It was her hour and she intended to clinch her popularity with one diplomatic stroke.

Mademoiselle should sit upon the throne! the People willed it!

But the end was not yet, and before it came her popularity was to increase and she was to be carried on its surging tide to a shore she little wished to reach. When Bordeaux was taken in 1650 Mademoiselle recorded her triumph; she was more sought out than the Queen-Regent herself. "During the stay of the Court throughout ten days," she wrote, "no one paid a visit to the Queen, and when she passed along the streets hardly any one paid her any attention; I do not think it could have been very agreeable to her to hear that my court was immense, and that no one cared to leave my house, when so few cared to go and see her."

In 1651 the adoration of Mademoiselle had by no means lessened. She was busy influencing the Frondeurs to action. Whenever possible she remained beside the King, but then came the demand of the people of Orleans that Monsieur or Mademoiselle should go at once, and the former delegated to his daughter the work which might well have been his own. He had loosed an impetuous spirit. Mademoiselle took leave of her father amidst the hurrahs of her people, and looking every inch a queen and a soldier in her gown of grey embroidered with gold lace, she set forth with her escort to take the place at the head of her men who, as she afterwards proudly remarked, "were in the field and all saluted me as their leader". She made the entry of the city on 27th March, 1652. "When the Queen of England heard that I had entered Orleans," wrote Mademoiselle in her *Memoirs*, "she said that it did not astonish her that I had saved the town from the

clutch of the enemy, as the Maid of Orleans had done before me, and that I had commenced in the same manner as she did by routing the English, meaning that I had chased away her son." Four months later Mademoiselle was the heroine of Saint-Antoine, but to save Condé she commanded the gunners to turn the cannon of the Bastille against the King's men, and this act cost her dear, for she "killed her husband" by it, as Mazarin said, meaning that she finally prevented Louis XIV. from offering her marriage.

The King's displeasure was not long in making itself felt. It descended first upon the luckless Gaston, who hurried from Paris "avec une extrême vitesse," and his daughter, having been requested to vacate the Tuileries, disappeared the same day, fleeing in a hired coach under a feigned name. She had barely set out on the way to her old château at Saint-Fargeau, which she had chosen as a refuge, because her father refused to shelter her at Blois, when she received the King's second message, guaranteeing her "all surety and freedom in any place in which she might elect to live". It was the beginning of a five years' exiledom.

The Château de Saint-Fargeau, where she spent most of the time during this period of banishment, was a ruined fortress. On her arrival she found there were broken windows, no doors and falling ceilings. She encamped in one of the cellars while an apartment was being made ready for her and she borrowed a bed. Before long she was visited by guests from Paris and she lodged them at her bailiff's. These were the Duchesse de Sully and her sister, the Marquise de Laval, who amiably put

up with a certain amount of discomfort during the restoration of the château. The apartments were enlarged, redecorated, refurnished in time, and Saint-Fargeau became a pleasant residence, where Mademoiselle kept an open and animated house. "Mme. la Comtesse de Maure and Mlle. de Vandy came to see me on their return from Bourbon;" she wrote in her *Memoirs* of these days, "this made a very agreeable visit for me; they were persons of wit and merit, whom I esteemed highly. Mesdames de Montgelas, de Lavardin and de Sévigné came especially from Paris; the first had already visited me twice; Mme. de Sully came while they were there and M. and Mme. de Béthune, who were going to take the waters; which altogether made a very pleasant circle."

She even came to love the old castle which at first had inspired her with horror and disgust and the grounds of which she described as so neglected, "que l'on n'y trouvait pas des herbes à mettre au pot". With her fortune it was easy to institute improvements. She sent to England for a pack of hounds and hunters, she had plenty of carriages, and she set an army of workmen to cut a mall through the brushwood and briars and to erect a fine terrace from which she gained a view of the château, a wood, a vineyard and a meadow with a river meandering through it. Indoor amusements were provided, a billiard-table being placed in the gallery; and battledore and shuttlecock created a diversion so much enjoyed by Mademoiselle that she played for two hours in the morning and two after dinner, her partner being Mme. de Frontenac, who, she said, "never ceased wrangling, though

she always beat me. I had the most dexterity, but strength won the day." Marl was played in the court, violin players were ordered from the Tuileries, and dancing became the occupation of the evening. A theatre was planned in 1653 in a great hall, well-lighted and decorated, and the country people came from all around, travelling as far as ten leagues to see the plays. Mademoiselle took great pride in showing the result of her endeavours to make the château habitable to her visitors. It was eight months before her own apartments were finished, and for this period she had perforce "lodged in a garret". But at length discomfort was at an end, and she found that her room "was really very pretty, with a cabinet at the end, and a wardrobe, and a little closet," as she described it, "just large enough to hold me. I decorated the closet with a number of pictures and mirrors and conceived that I had produced the most beautiful *chef-d'œuvre* in the world, showing it to all those who came to see me with as much complacency as the Queen, my grandmother, could have had in exhibiting the Luxembourg."

It was difficult for Mademoiselle to entertain as many guests as she could have wished and had all her life been accustomed to. "Our company," she wrote of this time, "was, to be sure, not very large, but the ladies were extremely good-looking. They, as well as myself, wore caps trimmed with fur, and ornamented with feathers. I had adopted this fashion from one worn by Madame de Sully *a la chasse*." Nor were intellectual pursuits neglected. For the first time Mademoiselle developed a taste for reading, and the books she read were those of

Gomberville, La Calprenède and Mlle. de Scudéry. It is quite possible that her copy of *Clélie*, like that which Addison mentions in Leonora's library,[1] opened of itself in the place that describes two lovers in a bower, and that her *Grand Cyrus* had likewise a pin stuck in one of the middle leaves; for love was more frequently the topic of conversation at Saint-Fargeau than literature or the beauties of nature, and in the romances of the day it held the foremost place. Discussion of such and kindred subjects led Mademoiselle to arrange her definite *causeries*, which Segrais reproduced in *Les Nouvelles Françaises*. Also during these years of exiledom she commenced to write her famous *Memoirs*, which she continued until 1660 and then resumed between 1677 and 1688.

In the summer of 1656, Mademoiselle left Saint-Fargeau and went to Forges, passing close by Paris for the first time since her exiledom. She found the change of scene delightful, life at Forges was extremely pleasant and there was plenty of gay society. It was the custom to rise at six, to take the waters, to welcome all newcomers and to promenade in the gardens. "After the promenade," she wrote in her account of life in this watering-place, "we changed our dresses, wearing in the morning rateen [a kind of woollen cloth] trimmed with fur, and taffety after dinner. . . . We dined at twelve with good appetites. . . . After dinner I received company; at five o'clock I went to the play; which was to me a great source of amusement. At six o'clock we supped, and then walked to the Capuchins, where we heard Litanies —all attending before they took their promenade. At nine o'clock we retired for the night."

[1] *Spectator*, Thursday, 12th April, 1711.

On the return journey from Forges, Mademoiselle stayed at Fontainebleau to meet Queen Christina of Sweden. She was particularly interested in this extraordinary woman, and in her *Memoirs* gave a full description, not only of her personal appearance but of all the formalities which preceded her own reception. Etiquette had to be very strictly preserved. Mademoiselle sent a message begging to know when she might have the honour of seeing the Queen and in what manner she was to be received. The reply came that she herself was to choose the conditions, and she made but one stipulation, that an arm-chair was to be prepared for her use, in which she would sit in the Queen's presence to mark her equality of rank and birth. "The Queen," she continued, "was in a beautiful room *à l'Italienne*, surrounded by a large company. She wore a grey petticoat trimmed with gold and silver lace; a plain coloured camlet *justaucorps*, with lace the same as the petticoat; a lace neckerchief of point, tied with a plain coloured ribbon, a flaxen wig, and a hat with black plumes, which she held in her hand. She was fair, with blue eyes, which at times assumed a very sweet expression; at others they looked, I thought, somewhat wild. Her mouth, although large, was agreeable, and she had fine teeth; her nose was large and aquiline. She was very little, but her *justaucorps* concealed her bad figure. At first sight she appeared to me like a pretty little boy. 'I am sure you wish to be seated,' she said to me, so I established myself in the arm-chair."

La Grande Mademoiselle had the bad taste to make her return to favour in the most ostentatious manner possible. She joined the Court at Sedan,

arriving with a large escort, amidst the clash of arms and blare of trumpets. "I arrived in the meadow at full speed," she wrote, "with the gendarmes and the light horse, their trumpets sounding in a most triumphant manner." The Queen-Mother embraced her kindly enough, and on her meeting with the King said of her: "Here is a Demoiselle whom I must present to you, and who is very sorry to have been so naughty; she promises to be wiser in future".

On the last day of 1657 Mademoiselle took up her abode in the Palace of Luxembourg, and both Court and city crowded to pay her visits. "It is easy to believe," she wrote in her *Memoirs*, "that during the first days of my arrival my house was never empty; for those who were not attracted towards me by their duty or their love, were so by novelty, which is always charming to the French."

Mademoiselle was still occupied with ideas of marrying the little Monsieur. "A young Prince," she declared, "handsome, well-made, brother of the King, appears a good match." At this time Philip, Duke of Anjou, was seventeen, Mademoiselle was thirty; he was effeminate, pampered, and encouraged in his weakling tendencies by his mother and Mazarin. In vain Mademoiselle stimulated him to heroic deeds, he was far better fitted for masques, balls and *fêtes*. "When I arrived at the Louvre," wrote Mademoiselle in her *Memoirs*, "Monsieur was dressed as a girl with long fair hair; the Queen said he resembled me"; and again, "We often disguised ourselves at these balls, making the prettiest masquerade you can conceive. Monsieur, Mlle. de Villeroy, Mlle. de Gourdon and myself were dressed in white and silver, trimmed with silver lace, and rose-

coloured edging; aprons and stomachers of black velvet, decorated with silver lace. Our dresses were fashioned like those of the Bressane, with ruffles and collars the same as theirs, of yellow linen, but in truth ours were of finer material, being made of *passement de Venise.* We wore hats of black velvet, with pink, white and flame-coloured plumes. My bodice was laced with pearls and fastened with diamonds, Monsieur and Mlle. de Villeroy were covered with diamonds and Gourdon with emeralds, our hair was dressed *en Paysannes de Bresse;* we carried crooks in our hands. . . . The Queen found our dresses very much to her taste."

In the intervals between Paris gaieties Mademoiselle travelled with the Court. She made several journeys in this manner in connection with the projected marriage of Louis XIV. This momentous event accomplished, Mademoiselle returned to Paris to settle down at the Luxembourg, and found that in the interval her step-mother, left a widow by the death of the Duc d'Orleans, had installed herself in her rooms. This close proximity resulted in turbulent scenes, Madame being subject to the "vapours," Mademoiselle to fits of tempestuousness. But, in spite of this drawback, the latter managed to enjoy herself. She arranged her life as a rich and independent princess, and entertained according to her own standard of profusion. Her conduct was not altogether pleasing to the King, who having established his own Court in full glory was inclined to indulge in jealousy where other social centres were concerned. Mademoiselle in her usual off-hand, imperious manner, and with her accustomed want of tact and diplomacy, observed nothing of this,

LOUIS XIV

FROM A MINIATURE BY PETITOT AT MONTAGU HOUSE

and drew more attention to herself and her doings than was altogether discreet. Her *salon* at this period was without doubt the first in Paris. Mme. de Rambouillet was old and ill, and her circle had dispersed during the Fronde. Mlle. de Scudéry had arranged her famous Saturday receptions and allowed her guests to fall into an exaggeration of the manners they had practised under the rule of the pioneer of preciosity. In the early sixties the best breeding and culture were to be found at Court, the home of silks and satins, plumes and ribbons, elegant manners and fine language. The highest society followed on the same lines, being recruited from the ranks of the nobility, and no one was better able to attract the real article than Mademoiselle, who was popular, of royal birth, and not unacquainted with the literary tastes of the day. She had friends galore and she knew how to entertain them well. They were gathered chiefly from the nobility, but a fair sprinkling of well-known men of letters was also to be found at her receptions.

Among women of note who visited at the Luxembourg were the Duchesse de Savoie, the Comtesse de Maure, Mme. de Béthune, Mme. de Thianges, sister of Mme. de Montespan, the Princesse de Conti, the Comtesse de Brégis,

> Cette aimable brune
> Dont la grâce n'est pas commune,[1]

the Duchesses de Chevreuse, d'Aiguillon, de Montbazon, de Rohan, the Princesse de Tarente, and her sister-in-law, Mlle. de la Trémouille, the Comtesse de Soissons, the Queen of Sweden, Princess Hen-

[1] Loret, *Muze Historique*, book i., letter xxi.

rietta, the Marquise de Bonnelle, Mlle. de Vandy, Mme. de Noailles, the Duchesse d'Uzès, the Duchesse de Grammont, Mme. de Motteville, Mme. d'Epernon, Mme. de Rambures, Mme. de Montausier, the Duchesse de Navailles and, among others too numerous to mention, the Duchesse de Châtillon, "handsome, witty, and intriguing," Mme. de la Fayette, who made her famous portrait of Mme. de Sévigné in Mademoiselle's *Galerie* under the pseudonym of *l'Inconnu*, and Mme. de Sévigné, sympathetic and kind as she usually was, who said of Mademoiselle, "I do not care to mix myself with her impetuosities," and then was kinder than her word.

The accounts in the *Muze Historique* of Mademoiselle's entertainments testify to their grandeur and to the life and movement, colour, music and gaiety by which they were accompanied. The following doggerel verses indicate the kind of event which frequently took place :—

Mademoiselle, a ce qu'on dit
Voulant maintenir son crédit
Et témoigner par quelques marques
Qu'elle est du beau sang des monarques,
Donna, l'autre soir, aux flambeaux,
Le bal aux dames de Bordeaux.
Qui, pour montrer leur braverie,
Portaient robes en broderie,
Non d'argent, de perles, ni d'or,
Mais de jets plus brilliant encor;
De vin on y bût mainte pipe,
On y joua grande Guenipe,
On y chanta divers motets
Et l'on dansa les Tricotets.

And again, in February, 1658—

Dimanche au soir, Mademoiselle
Donna le bal, au roi, chez elle
Avec un collation
Dont l'ample préparation
Ainsi que j'en fis la remarque
Etait digne d'un tel monarque.

The *fêtes* were held nearly every evening and with every possible diversion; first a comedy, a tragedy or a ballet, followed by a concert and all kinds of games, such as blind-man's buff, or battledore and shuttlecock; after which came dancing, and last of all a superb collation. She always ordered comedians to be present and at least twenty-four violins. She was the queen of society, and whatever money could buy to make her *salon* unique she provided lavishly.

La Grande Mademoiselle cared little for music except as an accompaniment to dancing. Lulli, however, was her favourite. He was brought to France by the Chevalier de Guise from his native Florence at the age of thirteen, and filled the office of cook or valet to Mademoiselle in the intervals of giving her Italian lessons. From his earliest youth he had composed very beautiful melodies without knowing a note of music, and was presently allowed to play in her band of violins, when she said of him: "He makes the most beatific airs in the world". He was dismissed from her household for having satirised her in a song, although her account of the affair differed somewhat, since she explained his departure by saying: "I was exiled: he did not wish to live in the country; he demanded leave to go away; I accorded it, and since he has made his fortune, for he is a great merry-andrew". The King, charmed with his talents, made him *surintendant* of his music. If her tastes were not genuinely musical, Mademoiselle

retained her liking for literature acquired at Saint-Fargeau and encouraged the presence in her *salon* of such men as La Rochefoucauld, Chapelain, Ménage, and Segrais, who said of her: "Mademoiselle might have been the happiest princess in the world had she so wished. . . . She had some very fine qualities, for she was good, gentle, gracious towards everybody and she had much wit and grandeur. Her house was well arranged, she had a very fine equipage, and she spent royally as becomes a princess, even giving pensions." In the end he was banished from her society, because he expressed an opinion adverse to her proposed marriage with Lauzun.

The Abbé Boyer, who was known as "the sufficiently good academician," was also a frequent guest, as well as Abbé Cotin, who one day brought some verses to the Luxembourg with the intention of reading them to Mademoiselle. She indiscreetly showed them to another poet, and this episode is said to have given rise to the scene in Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes* between Vadius and Trissotin ("Tricotin") in which the actual verses appear copied word for word. Mademoiselle was a great admirer of the famous dramatist, and in 1669 she arranged to have a reproduction of *La Tartuffe* in her *salon*. She gave a large *fête* on the 21st of August, and after the bulk of the guests had taken their departure, the play was performed before a select audience of her intimate friends.

About this time the new school of writers was coming to the fore and the echoes of the greatest literary battle of the century were heard at the Luxembourg. Mademoiselle opposed the rising school of dramatists. She held strongly to the *culte*

of Corneille, and the men of letters she encouraged among her visitors were those who were unfriendly to Racine.

Members of the nobility who were always welcomed by her were the Duc de Navailles, the Comte de Béthune, the Ducs de Beaufort, de Rohan, de Charost, the Prince de Condé, the Duc d'Epernon and Conti. Last, but not least in importance, came Charles Duc de Lorraine, who was at this time about forty-eight years of age, tall, robust and active, athletic, joyous and spiritual, every inch a warrior, beloved by his soldiers and his people, familiar and friendly with his inferiors, silent and reserved in the company of his equals or superiors, of whom it was said, "he had the eyes of a cat and its perfidy as well". A statement not entirely to his credit was that he regarded his marriage contract to be no more binding than many kings have held the conditions of a treaty. Mademoiselle made two attempts at different periods to capture him as a husband, but although he was invariably attentive and deferential, he did not conceal the fact that he preferred her step-sister, a want of discretion on his part which resulted in his marrying neither the one nor the other. "In 1660 Mademoiselle wished to marry the Prince Charles de Lorraine," wrote the Abbé de Choisy, who was an intimate at the Luxembourg, "she gave suppers every evening and there were violins, they danced part of the night. Unfortunately, however, her sister Mlle. d'Orleans was present at all these *fêtes*, as beautiful as the day and sixteen years old. Mademoiselle might have been taken for her grandmother. Prince Charles fell in love with her. The old girl soon noticed this and

broke up all the festivities;" and continuing in the same strain he accused her of talking and cackling so much when the affair was well advanced that she spoilt everything, for he said, "she was desperate at the thought of her younger sisters, beggars compared to herself, marrying under her very eyes". Mlle. d'Orleans, in spite of her love for Lorraine, later married the Duke of Tuscany, with very unfortunate results as far as her happiness was concerned. She and her younger sisters, Mlle. d'Alençon and Mlle. de Valois, were always present in La Grande Mademoiselle's *salon*, for they loved to escape from the depressing influence of their mother's society, and to join in the games and gaieties lavishly provided by their step-sister. There was only one restriction imposed by Mademoiselle upon her guests. She excluded card-playing. "Cards were not in the fashion there," wrote Choisy, "but there was a hundred times the amount of laughter on that account. There were violins, but usually we danced to singing." Because a number of very young visitors frequented the Luxembourg their amusements included more romping and children's games than would otherwise have been the case.

Mademoiselle's *salon* was particularly noteworthy for the craze of portrait-drawing which at that time was extremely popular. This art was introduced in 1657 and obtained a remarkably strong hold upon the society people. The origin of the practice rests with Mlle. de Scudéry, who introduced it in her novels, but it first caught the attention of Mademoiselle whilst she was staying at Champigny when the Princesse de Tarente and Mlle. de Trémouille showed her portraits they had written of them-

selves. She immediately pronounced them *forte galante* and proceeded not only to compose fresh ones but to persuade those around her to do the same. The rage for this sort of thing rapidly increased, and Segrais collected a number and had them printed under the title of *La Galerie des Portraits de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.* The volume contains portraits too numerous to mention. There were several on King Louis XIV., one by Mademoiselle and one by the Comtesse de Brégis in which he appeared under the name of Tircis, whilst Mademoiselle was called Amarante, one of her *noms de Parnasse.* The Queen-Mother, the King of England, the Queen of Sweden and other royalties were not allowed to escape the general fashion. Mademoiselle herself figured several times in the *Galerie.* She was described in verses by the Comtesse de la Suze, commencing:—

> Fille du souverain des dieux
> Qui des arts les plus glorieux
> Mérites l'éternal hommage;
> Minerve, viens à mon secours,
> Je veux peindre dans cet ouvrage
> Le plus rare objet de nos jours;

also in prose by M. de Sourdis and by herself. In the latter effusion she declared that she loved to know what was going on in the world rather with a view to keeping clear of it than to get mixed up in it, an opinion which was not always shared by her friends. She contributed portraits freely to the *Galerie,* including among her subjects Mme. de Brienne, *mère,* the Marquis d'Entragues, Mme. de Choisy, under the name of "The Charming Exile," for this lady had retired to Normandy by the King's order in

October, 1658, M. de Brais, her equerry, Mlle. de Vandy, maid-of-honour to Mademoiselle, her particular friend and the original of her *Princesse de Paphlagonie*. Mlle. Vandy was closely related to the Comtesse de Maure. It was written of her :—

> Le sage est justement prude comme Vandy ;
> Pour leur parler d'amour il faudroit estre hardy.

Besides these a number of others were from Mademoiselle's pen, most of them of visitors in her *salon*, such as the Duchesse d'Epernon, Mme. de Montgelas, Mme. de Thianges, and the Prince de Condé. The Comtesse de Brienne, *fille*, drew her own portrait, the Comtesse de Maure was drawn by the Marquis de Sourdis, the Marquise du Fresnoy was written by herself, the Marquise de Kergen also by herself, Mme. de Chavigny by the Abbé Cotin, Mme. la Comtesse d'Esche by herself and by M. Perrin, under the name of Diane. Mme. de Richelieu, Mme. la Comtesse de Vivonne, Mme. la Comtesse de la Marck, Mme. la Marquise de la Boulaye were also included, and in fact so were most of the members of the very large circle of friends Mademoiselle entertained at the Luxembourg ; a list interesting chiefly on that account. People of both sexes, of every rank and all denominations were bitten by the craze and victimised themselves or their friends, describing in intimate detail their personal appearance, which usually came first, their virtues and vices which came last. The language of these portraits was inflated, flattering, absurd, but at times grossly frank and unblushing. Men said what they liked about women, women what they thought about men. Beauty was extolled, virtues emphasised and idiosyn-

crasies revealed. The Duchesse de Châtillon commenced by remarking that she intended to use the greatest possible *naïveté*, and then continued, "This is why I can say that I have the most beautiful and best formed figure which has ever been seen," and so on in much the same strain. Whilst the original fashion lasted a couple of years, for a whole century it flourished at intervals and a revival which was almost as rampant as the original outbreak occurred in the time of Mme. du Deffand. It was aptly called "knowing the interior of people" by the beautiful Marquise de Mauny, friend of Mademoiselle, who in her description of herself said that her great joy was to converse at her ease, in suitable surroundings, with five or six people who were both spiritual, good and of the *beau monde*, for, she added, "Je crains fort de m'encanailler". This word, much used by the *précieuses*, was said by Somaize to have been invented by the lady just mentioned. "If I continue in this strain," she wrote, neatly rounding off her account, "this would be a confession rather than a portrait."

A second interruption was presently to occur in the calm continuity of Mademoiselle's Paris life. She refused to marry Alphonse VI., King of Portugal, and was banished to Saint-Fargeau. Alphonse was an impossible person, fat, paralysed, gluttonous and dirty, and Turenne, who had acted as messenger on behalf of Louis XIV., was forbidden by Mademoiselle even to mention his name. During the first few months of her banishment Mademoiselle was indiscreet enough to keep her affairs before the King's notice both in writing and by speech, instead of allowing them to drop into oblivion. She offered of her own freewill

to marry M. the Duc de Savoie. The King was not appeased, however. "I will think of you when it suits me and marry you when it will be of service to me," he said roughly, and frightened by his threat she set off for Forges and then to the Château d'Eu, a property she had recently acquired. There she received a message commanding her to remain at Saint-Fargeau until further orders. She found the place exceedingly dull at this time, and after staying there for five months requested permission to return to Eu. This favour was conceded and for a time she was more contented. She received a number of visitors at her château. "There were many provincial people reasonable enough; a number of persons of rank; but my heart was heavy," she wrote, "comedians came to offer themselves; but I was in no humour for them. I began to be discouraged. I read; I worked; days were occupied in writing; all these things made the time pass insensibly." But the Château d'Eu was in a gloomy situation, with sea, winds and bleak country. Paris appeared gay to her from the sheer force of contrast, and she felt that the stream of life was indeed passing her by. At length, overcome by the desolateness of her surroundings, she besought the King to lessen the period of her exile, and in 1664 received permission to return to the capital. As before, she was welcomed on her return by "all Paris," but her day was almost over, and the failure of one or two more marriage projects marked her definite decline. The marriage arranged for her with the Duc de Savoie after the death of his wife, her step-sister, fell through completely, she refused the Duc de Neufbourg, Monsieur, whose wife Henrietta had also died, did not wish to be inveigled

into becoming her husband, and the Comte de Saint-Paul, related both to the Longuevilles and the Condés, who was suggested by such intimate friends as Mme. the Marquise de Puisieux, Mme. de la Fayette and Mme. d'Epernon, found no favour in her eyes. "She had not succeeded in her wishes," wrote Mme. de Motteville, referring to the failure of all attempts to settle her in life, "always roughly rejecting matches that would have suited her, because, at the time they were offered, her fancies had made her desire others whom she could not have. So, by a continual return at the wrong moment to the various great princes of Europe, it may be said that she had rejected nearly all of them, and that they in turn had rejected her. The qualities of her mind, the good qualities as much as the bad, had on all occasions injured her."

And then came the inevitable and pathetic sequel! More than forty years of age, set aside to make room for younger princesses, no longer "second to the throne," Mademoiselle was to succumb to an emotion which she had always disregarded as an important factor in her marriage schemes. Love was for the commoner, the ordinary person, or the poet; one with as high a destiny as her own, born to rule kingdoms, to have the welfare of a people at heart, to exalt the honour of a house, had no use for it, no right to let it sway other considerations. Alas for these very proper sentiments, they were scattered like the most fragile card-castle at the first touch of the adverse wind, and Mademoiselle was drawn unwittingly, unwillingly, into the vortex of the *affaire Lauzun* and the *mariage manqué*.

In her *Memoirs* she dwells very fully on her gradual awakening to the knowledge of her love for a man

she knew to be far beneath her in rank, whilst defending him in spite of this drawback. "I saw the course I should take," she wrote, "and that it was the will of heaven I should feel in my heart that marriage alone could give me repose. . . . It was in such moments as these that I came to the conclusion that my inquietude had not been without foundation, while the merit I had discovered in M. de Lauzun, his distinguished conduct as extolled by others, the elevation of his soul, raising him far above ordinary men, the charm of his conversation and other intellectual accomplishments which I knew how to appreciate, convinced me that he was the only man capable of sustaining the dignity of the position which my rank and fortune would confer—the only person, in short, worthy of my choice." It is a pitiful story this of the old Mademoiselle, casting aside the traditions of a lifetime and sighing like any love-sick maiden of sixteen, throwing herself at the head of a man who was obviously playing a game in which he meant to win heavy stakes, and playing it leisurely, calmly, and with consummate skill. Lauzun was not a pleasing person, but he had a certain charm for women, and the King himself was influenced by some peculiarity of his character. It was said he had a strain of madness, a fascinating tinge of eccentricity, that his intelligence and love of intrigue made him dangerous; beyond this he was mischievous and malicious and had been called "the most insolent little man born in the century". As for his personal appearance, it was far from prepossessing. His hair was blonde and grey, ill-combed and greasy, his eyes blue and red-rimmed, his figure insignificant and his attire negligent. Although

Mademoiselle was not entirely blind to his defects, she ignored them and summed him up in the phrase, "Finally he pleased me; and I love him passionately".

This extraordinary love affair and its tragic conclusion is told in Mme. de Sévigné's letters, and nothing could surpass her dramatic description of the projected marriage and its effect upon the world of Paris. The account is well known but is too inimitable to be omitted. It occurs in a short series of letters written to M. de Coulanges, the first of which is dated 15th December, 1670.

"I am going to tell you a thing, the most astonishing, the most surprising, the most marvellous, the most miraculous, the most magnificent, the most confounding, the most unheard of, the most singular, the most extraordinary, the most incredible, the most unforeseen, the greatest, the least, the rarest, the most common, the most public, the most private till to-day, the most brilliant, the most enviable; in short, a thing of which there is but one example in past ages, and that not an exact one neither; a thing that we cannot believe at Paris; how then will it gain credit at Lyons? a thing which makes everybody cry, 'Lord, have mercy upon us!' a thing which causes the greatest joy to Mme. de Rohan and Mme. d'Hauterive; a thing, in fine, which is to happen on Sunday next, when those who are present will doubt the evidence of their senses; a thing which, though it is to be done on Sunday, yet perhaps will not be finished on Monday. I cannot bring myself to tell it to you; guess what it is. I give you three times to do it in. What, not a word to throw to a dog? Well then, I find I must tell you. M. de Lauzun is to be married

next Sunday at the Louvre to—— pray, guess to whom! I give you four times to do it in, I give you six, I give you a hundred. Says Mme. de Coulanges, 'It is really very hard to guess: perhaps it is Madame de la Vallière'. Indeed, madam, it is not. 'It is Mademoiselle de Retz, then?' No, nor she neither; you are extremely provincial. 'Lord, bless me,' say you, 'what stupid wretches we are! it is Mademoiselle de Colbert all the while.' Nay, now you are still farther from the mark. 'Why, then, it must certainly be Mademoiselle de Créquy.' You still have not got it. Well, I find I must tell you at last. He is to be married next Sunday, at the Louvre, with the King's leave, to Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle de—Mademoiselle—guess, pray guess her name; he is to be married to Mademoiselle, the great Mademoiselle; Mademoiselle, daughter to the late Monsieur; Mademoiselle, grand-daughter of Henri IV.; Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orleans, Mademoiselle the King's cousin-german, Mademoiselle, destined to the throne, Mademoiselle, the only match in France that was worthy of Monsieur. What glorious matter for talk!"

And then four days later:—

"What is called falling from the clouds, happened last night at the Tuileries. . . . You have already shared in the joy, the transport, the ecstasies of the Princess and her happy lover. It was just as I told you, the affair was made public on Monday. Tuesday was passed in talking, astonishments and compliments. Wednesday Mademoiselle made a deed of gift to M. de Lauzun, investing him with certain titles, names and dignities, necessary to be inserted

in the marriage contract, which was drawn up that day. . . . Thursday morning, which was yesterday, Mademoiselle was in expectation of the King's signing the contract as he had said he would do; but, about seven o'clock in the evening, the Queen, Monsieur and several old dotards that were about him, had so persuaded his Majesty that his reputation would suffer in this affair, that sending for Mademoiselle and M. de Lauzun he announced to them, before the Prince, that he forbade them to think any farther of this marriage."

In vain her friends had urged her to hasten the ceremony upon receiving the King's permission for it to be performed. Delay had been her undoing.

"It is a story," continued Mme. de Sévigné on the 24th, "well adapted for a tragedy, and in accordance with all the rules of the drama. We laid out the acts and scenes the other day. We took four days instead of four and twenty hours, and the play was complete. Never was such a change seen in so short a time; never was there so general an emotion."

Mademoiselle was overcome with grief, with humiliation, with despair. The best account of that fatal evening when the King withdrew his permission to her marriage is from the pen of an eye-witness to the first paroxysm of her anguish. The ceremony had been arranged to take place at midnight. "At six o'clock in the evening," wrote the Abbé de Choisy, "I was in Mademoiselle's room, who told us to follow her into a neighbouring apartment arranged for M. de Lauzun. It was magnificently furnished. 'Do you not think?' she said to us, 'that a cadet of Gascony will be well lodged here?'

"At eight o'clock the King sent for her and refused to allow the ceremony to proceed. She threw herself on her knees, screamed and cried, and returned to the Luxembourg half desperate. We were in her room at nine o'clock waiting for her to return from the Louvre. Two of her valets entered and said aloud, 'Please take your departure as quickly as possible'. Everybody crowded out, but I stayed amongst the last, and saw the Princess returning from the end of the *salle des gardes* like a fury, her hair dishevelled and menacing heaven and earth with her arms. She had smashed the panes in her carriage-windows on the drive back."

It was indeed a pathetic ending to all her fine marriage projects. The following year Lauzun fell from favour, underwent arrest and imprisonment, and for ten long years Mademoiselle did everything in her power to obtain his pardon. At length this end was achieved by means of parting with half her fortune to the little Duc du Maine, a conciliatory act greatly pleasing both to the King and Mme. de Montespan, the child's mother. Mademoiselle paid thus dearly with no better result than to quarrel with her former lover, to beat him, to be beaten by him, and eventually to part in disgust, for in the end she had the courage to order him never to appear again in her presence. A doubt exists as to whether they had been privately married or not, but at that period the familiarities enumerated cannot be taken to throw any decisive light on this point. Lauzun was inconstant and remained so to the last; he was ungrateful, scheming, grasping, but was clever enough to appear quite otherwise. Unhappy at Court, unhappy in her own home, Mademoiselle disappeared

from the world, and acknowledged herself to be the cipher she had long since been regarded. In 1693 she died at the age of sixty-six and M. de Lauzun put his household into mourning for her. He survived her by thirty years and made himself extremely unpleasant during that period to the young and charming girl of sixteen, who had married him in the hope of becoming his widow and inheriting some of the wealth which had accrued to him through his affair with Mademoiselle—or perhaps she too fell under the influence, an influence which had been instrumental in causing one of France's proudest flowers to lie humbled in the dust. Had it not been Lauzun, it might have been even so with another, for La Grande Mademoiselle was afflicted with pride and indecision, a combination which sooner or later was bound to cause her undoing.

III. MADAME DE SÉVIGNE

THE SALON OF FRIENDSHIP

HAPPY, because she was surrounded by intimate friends, appreciating their love and esteem, above all, rejoicing in the praise and admiration which they bestowed upon her daughter, this, in three phrases, is the simple story of Madame de Sévigné in the capacity of *salonière*. The charming Marquise has been frequently represented by her biographers as the fondest and least reticent of mothers, she has been extolled by many and feared by some as a stylist and voluminous letter-writer, she has been regarded as a saint and idol by other worshippers than Walpole, Gray and Mackintosh, but she has rarely been depicted in the guise which admirably became her of a dispenser of unpretentious and homely hospitality at a day when entertaining generally meant to be invaded by a crowd of brilliant, witty, pleasure-seeking people. People, that is to say, who were light of heart and quick of brain, open to every form of flattery, ready to feast and drink at their host's expense, to exhibit their own talents or simulate another's, to flaunt their vices and conceal their virtues, to shine, to glitter, to sparkle, to effervesce, and to leave behind an impression as gorgeous, as fascinating, as fleeting and elusive as the trail of a rocket's stars at the moment of extinction against the dark background of the sky.

So little of all this took place at the Hôtel de Carnavalet that the question arises, "Why did Madame de Sévigné give so few formal entertainments?" Throughout her correspondence she rarely described a gathering of many guests in her own house, yet she never omitted details of available news, and such affairs would inevitably have been mentioned by her. Her pecuniary position did not warrant a large expenditure in this direction—she left it to the De Grignans to live beyond their means—and her personal tastes were not in accordance with it. She cared little for empty display; she did not wish to impress her friends with a sense of her own position, nor to pretend an enjoyment in ceaseless gaiety she did not feel. She preferred to live simply and to appear what she really was, one of the most affectionate, happy-natured, easy-going, friendly women imaginable, ready to make everybody feel at home and to welcome with open arms all who cared to accept what she had to offer. And she had much to offer to the few, for she thoroughly enjoyed having one or two, perhaps four or six of her intimate friends around her, however unassuming they may have been in rank or wit or social pretensions, and to be at her gayest with them, to shine at her best, and to speak freely as she loved to speak of the foremost interest the world possessed for her, her daughter, and listen, as she loved even better to listen, to a discussion of the same theme, until it becomes impossible not to wonder how many of her friends wore it threadbare on her behalf rather than her daughter's. This was the social atmosphere in which Mme. de Sévigné breathed most naturally, in which she appeared to be invariably lovable and never in the least tiresome.

She made witty remarks without being ill-natured, sarcastic ones without being caustic; she gave good advice in the kindliest manner, and demanded that others should respect her feelings as she respected theirs. In short, she was far better suited to be the centre of a limited intimate circle than of an ungovernable multitude of mere acquaintances. It was her *métier*. Not that she was priggish, or exclusive, or uncomfortably *dévote*. She was only thought to be so. She enjoyed life and knew where to seek pleasure. She was interested in other people's affairs and she liked to hear Court gossip. Although she hated to be mixed up in any way with artifice or intrigue herself, she was a student of men and manners, and therefore liked to speculate on what would happen to others, who was in favour, who out of it, who was to receive rewards, who would suffer banishment, imprisonment or death; and no one rejoiced more gladly over the good fortune of others or sorrowed more truly with them in their griefs than she.

Some of these traits were pointed out by Sir James Mackintosh in his *Indian Journal*. "It is part of Madame de Sévigné's natural character," he wrote on 28th February, 1812, "that she is frank, joyous and does not conceal her relish for the pleasures and distinctions of life. As she indulges every natural feeling just to the degree necessary to animate her character and to vary her enjoyment, without approaching vicious excess, she finds no inconsistency in rambling from the vanities of Versailles to admiration, at least, of the austerities of Port Royal: she is devout without foregoing the world, or blaming the ambitious. The great charm of her character seems to me a *natural* virtue. In what she does as

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

well as in what she says, she is unforced and unstudied ; nobody I think had so much morality without constraint, and played so much with amiable failings without falling into vice. Her ingenious, lively, social disposition gave the direction to her mental power. She has so filled my heart with affectionate interest in her as a living friend that I can scarcely bring myself to think of her as being a writer, or as having a style ; but she has become a celebrated, probably an immortal writer, who never conceived the possibility of acquiring fame."

A more flattering portrait still is that from the pen of Mme. de la Fayette, to whom we owe many intimate details concerning the woman who was her bosom friend for more than forty years. This portrait was written by one who seemingly could see no faults, scarcely a blemish on the object of its praise. Having declared her figure to be perfect, her complexion fresh and blooming, her mouth, her teeth and her hair unrivalled, the writer continued, "Your mind so greatly adorns and beautifies your person that when you are animated by conversation from which restraint is banished, there is nothing on earth so pleasing. . . . Your mind is great, noble, adapted to dispense wealth and incapable of stooping to the care of hoarding it : you are susceptible to fame and ambition, and no less so to pleasures—you seem to be born for them, and they appear to have been created for you : your presence adds to diversion and diversions enhance your beauty. In short, joy is the natural state of your soul, and sorrow is more unnatural in you than in any other. . . . In fine, Heaven has endowed you with charms such as were never given to another, and the world is under an

obligation to you for having manifested so many admirable qualities which were before unknown."

Walpole's admiration was expressed in terser terms. He called Mme. de Sévigné "Notre Dame du Rochers," a phrase rendered in Mme. du Deffand's letters to him as "cette Sainte de Livry". She was also to him that "divine woman" who "spread the same leaf-gold over *places* with which she gilded all her *friends*," and he regarded her writing as a model in the finest style. Oddly enough, the very qualities he saw in her were those which Mme. du Deffand most lacked, and this no doubt increased the bitter little spirit of rivalry which peeped out in her letters to him against the woman of the previous century.

Marie de Rabutin-Chantal was born at the Place-Royale-du-Marais on the 5th of February, 1626. Her father, Celse-Bénigne de Rabutin, Baron de Chantal, died eighteen months after her birth, and her mother, who had been Marie de Coulanges before she married into the Rabutin family, died in August, 1633, leaving her little orphaned daughter at the age of seven in the charge of her maternal grandparents, M. and Mme. de Coulanges. This arrangement did not last long, the speedy death of grandmother and grandfather necessitated a meeting of the family for the purpose of appointing a fresh guardian, and her uncle the Abbé de Coulanges, then only twenty-nine years of age, was chosen for the post. For fifty years he was her faithful friend and wise counsellor, and when he died at the age of eighty she declared that to him she owed the happiness and peace of her life. She had two teachers in her youth, Ménage and Chapelain. The former

made a practice of falling in love with all his pupils, and no exception to this rule occurred in favour of Mlle. de Rabutin-Chantal, whom he adored both before and after her marriage. He was young at this time and wrote verses to her, "Of heaven the most perfect work, ornament of the Court, and wonder of the age, amiable Sévigné," he declared, "whose charms captivate reason and overpower the senses, but whose virtue, imprinted on her countenance, inspires respect and fear in the boldest". It is not surprising to learn that it was from Chapelain she obtained more solid knowledge, for he was a good critic though a bad poet, and being an older man than Ménage his affection for his young charge had little of passionate sentiment in its composition. Both Ménage and Chapelain were men of the world and frequenters of the best society, and it was through their good offices that Mme. de Sévigné was intellectually fitted to take a high place among the cultured circle of the *précieuses* at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Before her entrance into this group, however, she passed many happy days at Livry, one of her country estates which she designated the "amiable desért," but which she loved well enough. Here with her uncle, the *Bien-Bon*, she stayed in a *solitude à deux*.

Walpole has described this beautiful spot. "I was dreaming dreams," he wrote to George Montagu on 3rd April, 1766, "in short, I had dined at Livry; yes, yes, at Livry with a Langlade and de la Rochefoucaulds. The Abbey is now possessed by an Abbé de Malherbe. Livry is situated in the Forêt de Bondi very agreeably on a flat, but with hills near it, and in prospect. . . . Not a tree exists

that remembers the charming woman, because in this country an old tree is a traitor and forfeits its head to the crown; but the plantations are not young and might very well be as they were in her time. The Abbé's house is decent and snug; a few paces from it is the sacred pavilion built for Mme. de Sévigné by her uncle (the *Bien-Bon*) and much as it was in her day; a small saloon below for dinner, then an arcade, but the niches now closed and painted in fresco with medallions of her, the Grignan, the Fayette and the Rochefoucauld. Above a handsome room with a chimneypiece in the best taste of Louis XIV.'s time; a holy family in good relief over it, and the cypher of her uncle Coulanges; a neat little bed-chamber within, and two or three clean little chambers over them. On one side of the garden leading to the great road is a little bridge of wood on which the dear woman used to wait for the courier that brought her daughter's letters." From this idyllic retreat Marie de Rabutin-Chantal stepped forth in the early days into the great world and, dutiful to her guardian, looked about her with a view to making a suitable marriage. "She had the most beautiful complexion; lips rosy and fresh; a fine figure; and hair fair, thick and wavy," said her cousin Bussy of her at this time, and being a pretendant to her hand he was undoubtedly in a position to judge. Add to this a nose somewhat too square, light blue eyes, full of fire, wit and withal gentleness, and the outward picture of this fascinating young lady is complete and perfect.

It is not surprising that Bussy felt her charm. He was one of those unreliable scapegraces, full of a certain lovableness, of bold wit and sympathetic in-

tellectuality, pleasing in appearance, and insinuating in manner, who was bound to be attracted by a decidedly eligible cousin, possessed of a handsome fortune, and apparently there in readiness to fall to his share like a ripe plum. *Le Bien-Bon*, however, interfered, and thereby showed his astuteness. He did not see happiness for his charge in the alliance. Unfortunately, however, he permitted her to make a marriage with a man whose character was as little calculated to ensure her a life of peace and prosperity. If Bussy was vain and malignant, hypocritical, sarcastic and untrustworthy, the Marquis de Sévigné was equally unreliable, fickle, unfaithful, quarrelsome and a spendthrift. Yet at first sight the proposed match appeared to be a very suitable one. De Sévigné was young, handsome, rich and of good family. It was not until after his marriage that his faults became apparent.

The wedding was arranged to take place early in 1644, but owing to a duel in which De Sévigné was severely wounded the ceremony had to be postponed until August. Thus a duel formed the prologue as it was to form the epilogue of this unfortunate union. The young Marquise, who was just eighteen, was happy enough for the first year or two of her married life, which she passed at her country estate, the Rochers. Later she called this home in Brittany "those poor Rochers".

The house was a massive pile of stone built in the Gothic style and enclosed by high walls. There were several towers, in one of which was a staircase, in another her green boudoir, a morning-room, and her bedroom with its roomy bed hung with yellow satin embroidered in gold, silver and coloured silks.

A large garden stretched on one side of the château, and beyond that an orchard. There was a mall, a labyrinth and a number of beautiful paths and alleys, to which Mme. de Sévigné gave fancy names, such as *Solitaire*, *Infinie*, *l'Humeur de ma Fille*, etc. There was a *Place Coulanges*, celebrated for its echo, and a *Place Madame* planted with rows of magnificent trees. Her letters written at the Rochers make frequent reference to the tranquillity and peaceful joys of her life there; the improvements on the estate, the work of her faithful gardener, Pilois, and the round of country pursuits are all recorded. "Haymaking," she wrote, when all the servants were sent into the fields at the busy season, "is the prettiest thing in the world; it is playfully turning hay in a field: he who knows so much, knows how to make hay." The refusal of one of her footmen to take a share in the pastime was followed by his dismissal. Mme. de Sévigné was proud of her domain, loved it to be perfectly in order, and expected every one to perform his share of the duties entailed in carrying out this ideal.

The Rochers formed an even more appropriate setting to the sweet-natured woman than the less tranquil atmosphere of the Hôtel de Carnavalet, and the simple beauties of nature delighted her more than Court or society life. The latter were necessary interests, because her daughter's tastes demanded her to keep in touch with them. But when she gave the Rochers into the hands of her son at his marriage and felt herself no longer mistress there, the first strand snapped in the cord which bound her to her very own. The background of the Rochers threw her character into relief and showed it in its

truest light, and when she was removed from it by circumstances a void was left, a note of yearning sounded. Sir James Mackintosh echoed the same sad cry when he finished perusing the whole of the De Sévigné collection of letters and voiced the lament, "into what a new world am I fallen. . . . An impudent country house, called 'Belombre,' pretends to maintain the honours of Les Rochers! No Sévignés—no Rabutins—no Grignans—no Coulanges! almost all memory of the heroic age is lost."

In the early days, however, no such shadow loomed. The year 1646 was spent at Paris amid the pleasures of the capital, and in 1647 Madame de Sévigné was again at the Rochers where her son was born in March and her daughter in the following year. In 1649 she returned to Paris and established a circle of her own. The Hôtel de Rambouillet was nearing its decline, and the Fronde was approaching its height. Madame de Sévigné was very intimate at this date with the Duchesse de Chevreuse, a famous wit and beauty known in several of the Courts of Europe during the reign of Louis XIII. This lady was the daughter of the Duc de Montbazon by his first wife, and had been married to the Duc de Luynes before she became the wife of the Duc de Chevreuse. She was very closely in touch with the leaders of the revolutionary movement, and when the Marquis and Marquise de Sévigné gave an elaborate supper in her honour, after returning from a drive in the *Cours de la Reine*, a comment appeared in Loret's *Muze Historique*, the collection of letters in verse containing news of the day already mentioned which was printed week by week, and familiarly called the *Gazette Burlesque*.

The letter of 16th July, 1650, commenced as follows :—

> On fait ici grand mention
> D'une belle collation
> Qu'à la duchesse de Chevreuse
> Sévigné, de bande frondeuse
> Donna depuis quatre ou cinq jours,
> Au sortir justement du Cours.

Gay as she invariably was during these years, Mme. de Sévigné cannot have been particularly happy. Her young husband forfeited her respect if not her affection by his dissolute habits. Bussy, her devoted cousin and confidant, was the first to inform her that her most dangerous rival was the incomparable Ninon, who was later to work havoc with the peace of both her son and grandson. By this act of misguided friendship Bussy hoped to reap a reward, but in that he was disappointed.

Madame de Sévigné was not called upon to keep up the appearances of her marriage for very long. In February, 1651, the Marquis de Sévigné was killed in a duel, and she was left free to withdraw into the country and devote herself to her two children, of whom she was passionately fond. The *Bien-Bon* was reinstated guardian in chief, the seven years of her married life constituting the only break in their long companionship.

After a period of mourning, Mme. de Sévigné reappeared in the gay world and found herself surrounded by friends. Besides the Duchesse de Chevreuse already mentioned there was the Duchesse de Châtillon, an imperious beauty with a dangerous taste for politics. She was the younger daughter of M. de Montmorency-Boutteville and the

"adored divinity" of Condé. Saint-Simon said of her that "handsome, witty, very gay and still more perhaps intriguing, she made all her life much talk in the world in her three conditions of young girl, Duchesse de Châtillon, and lastly Duchesse de Mecklenburg". It was she, as we have already seen, who wrote the frank portrait of herself, saying, "My bearing is entirely agreeable and in all my actions I have an air infinitely *spirituel.* My face is a most perfect oval, according to all standards; my forehead is slightly elevated, which aids the regularity of the oval. My eyes are brown, very brilliant, and very deeply set; the gaze is very gentle, and, at the same time, full of fire and spirit." Mme. de la Suze also described her, in verse, for eulogies became her and no flattery was too fulsome to please.

Mme. la Marquise de la Trousse must be numbered among Mme. de Sévigné's closest friends. This lady was her aunt and before marriage had been Henriette de Coulanges. Another was Mme. de Lavardin, of whom she wrote, "my old and intimate friend, that woman of so good and solid a mind, that illustrious widow who had gathered us all under her wing, that person of so great a merit". Besides Mlle. de Scudéry and several of the Frondeuses, Mme. de la Vergne and Mme. de la Fayette deserve special notice as belonging to her immediate circle. The life-long friendship with the latter was begun in 1650, when her mother, Mme. de Vergne, married Mme. de Sévigné's uncle by marriage, M. Renaud de Sévigné. At the time of her mother's second marriage, Mlle. de la Vergne was nineteen and already renowned for her beauty and her wit. She had been born in 1634 at Havre and

educated there, her father being governor of the city. She had great literary ability and wrote several novels, among them *Zuyde* and the famous *Princesse de Clèves*. Segrais said of her that three months after she began to learn Latin she knew more than her teachers, M. Ménage and Père Rapin. She published her first writings under the pseudonym of "Segrais," but soon abandoned it for her own name. Her friendship for the Duc de la Rochefoucauld became as celebrated as his earlier passion for the Duchesse de Longueville, and she said of him, "Il m'a donné de l'esprit, mais j'ai reformé son cœur". Mme. de Maintenon described him as having "une physionomie heureuse, l'air grand, beaucoup d'esprit, et peu de savoir". He suffered as violently from gout as Mme. de la Fayette did from melancholy and broken health. Mme. de Sévigné spent much time with both of them, listening sometimes to his reading of the famous *Maxims*.

During her early widowhood there were many aspirants besides her cousin Bussy to Mme. de Sévigné's favours if not to her hand. The Duc de Rohan and the Marquis de Tonquedec, a Breton nobleman, were amongst her ardent admirers. The former was of the Chabot family, and made a romantic marriage with Mlle. de Rohan, a great heiress whose name he took. Her mother had violently opposed the match, but without avail. Mlle. de Rohan, infatuated by her lover's good looks, his grace and amiability, accorded to him the honour she had refused to the Comte de Soissons, the Duc de Weimar and others, and endowed him with her worldly estate, rank and affections. These gifts were none of them reciprocated by him, and his

infatuation for Mme. de Sévigné led to an awkward *contretemps*. He encountered Tonquedec at her house and brought her name into notoriety by disputing with him. The affair was reported by Loret in book iii., letter 24, of the *Muze Historique* :—

> Rohan dont le cœur et la mine,
> L'ont fait parvenir à l'hermine,
> Et le Marquis de Tonquedec
> Quoique dans un lieu de respect,
> Savoir, chez Sévigné la belle,
> Eurent entr'eux grosse querelle.

The result was a duel, and a second such affair was averted with difficulty.

The Comte de Lude, too, was not behindhand in pressing his suit, and the Prince de Conti, brother of Condé, was attracted by her charms. The latter was handsome but crippled, intellectual but inconstant, and generally possessed of conflicting qualities. He confided his feelings towards Mme. de Sévigné to Bussy, who wrote to her on the subject somewhat ill-naturedly on 16th June, 1654: "Take care, my charming cousin; the woman who is not guided by interest is sometimes led away by ambition, and she who can refuse the King's financier, may be induced to yield to his majesty's cousin". The references were of course to Fouquet and Conti. Of the former Boileau had said, "Never did woman frown on the *Surintendant* of Finances," and if it be true that Mme. de Sévigné was not severe, at any rate she did not follow the example of many others and accept money from him. She was, however, his sincere friend and watched the events which culminated in his downfall with unrelaxing attention. Unfortunately some of her letters were

found amongst his papers at the time of his arrest, and whilst they contained nothing more compromising than matters relating to the family affairs of her cousin, the Marquis de la Trousse, her reputation was seriously injured, and in her trouble she called upon several of her friends to contradict the aspersions cast upon her fair fame. Amongst those only too well pleased to do her this service were Simon de Pomponne, son of Arnauld d'Andilly, and brother of the celebrated Abbé Arnauld the great apostle of Jansenism, Chapelain, Ménage and Bussy himself. The latter had not ceased to persecute her with his own attentions. His behaviour towards her was in keeping with his unstable temperament. He frequently played unkind tricks upon her and then expressed undying chagrin and solicited her help in his difficulties. He allowed a vile and calumnious description of her to appear in his *Histoire Amoreuse des Gaules*, but when his indiscretions awakened the severe displeasure of Louis XIV., and resulted in his being banished from Court for seventeen years, he expected his cousin to forgive his falsehoods and hypocrisies and help him back into favour, and this she actually endeavoured to do.

The great Turenne was also her suitor, and upon him she likewise bestowed her friendship. Her account of his death is famous for its graphic and effective language. His character appealed especially to her, for it was more remarkable for genuine worth than brilliancy, and she estimated it at its right value.

This rivalry among her friends was at its height in the later fifties before her daughter was introduced into the gay world by Mme. de Sévigné, who was

herself its spoiled darling. Mlle. Françoise made a propitious entrance into society. She was beautiful, an heiress, cold, with an insatiable appetite for admiration, of which she won full measure, and was little more than a child, this "plus jolie fille de France," whom the Abbé de la Mousse, her mother's familiar, chided for her vanity.

From 1663 to 1669 mother and daughter were inseparable, living in a whirling world of masquerades, *fêtes*, balls, ballets and receptions. When Françoise de Sévigné was fifteen the King honoured her by dancing with her, and the Marquis de Tréville, famous for his *bon mots*, declared, "Cette beauté brûlera le monde". Fortunately nothing quite so serious happened, for the King's attentions wandered elsewhere. Frequent visits were paid to Madame du Plessis-Guénégaud, friend of Fouquet, at the Château de Fresnes and at her "enchanted palace," the Hôtel de Nevers. This lady possessed enormous wealth, and Mme. de Sévigné said of her, "she is a woman of great wit and of great opinions, who has a great art in possessing a great fortune". She had likewise charming manners, was a *précieuse* and was called "Amalthée". Boileau, Racine and La Fontaine were among her set, and the latter dedicated his fable of "Le Lion Amoureux" to Mlle. de Sévigné, the opening verses of which were full of grace and expression. At the end he referred to her coldness and indifference. Mme. de Sévigné loved the poet's fables and committed some of them to memory, "Le Singe et le Chat" being one of her particular favourites.

Among her friends were not only the *noblesse*, but great financiers, bishops and men of letters and

genius. They included a number of the Rambouillet set, such as Mme. de Feuquières, M. de Sens, M. de Saintes and M. de Barillon, M. de Caumartin and others. Almost every house of any note was open to her and she went everywhere accompanied by her daughter.

Mademoiselle de Sévigné, who was fêted and sung by all the poets, was loved by nobody. In attractiveness her mother overshadowed her. Difficulties arose concerning her marriage, which at length in 1668 was arranged with the Marquis de Grignan, widower twice over. He was thirty-seven years of age, tall and of good figure, stately and polite. He was first married to Angélique, daughter of the Marquise de Rambouillet, then to Mlle. du Puy-du-Fou. To Mme. de Sévigné the match appeared most propitious. De Grignan was then at Court, and she wrote to Bussy on the 4th of December to tell him "that at length the prettiest girl of France was to marry not the best-looking boy, but one of the most honest men of the realm," adding facetiously and perhaps not in the best of taste, "All his wives have died to make room for your cousin". The marriage took place on the 29th of January, 1669, and in the following November De Grignan was appointed Lieutenant-General of Provence and became practically Governor. Thus in 1670, after the birth of her first child, a daughter, Mme. de Grignan left Paris to her mother's never-ending grief, and at this date the long series of letters commenced in which much is disclosed concerning the home life of Mme. de Sévigné.

The friends who crowded round the bereaved mother in the hope of somewhat assuaging her deep

despair at the parting, were those simple-minded and loving intimates who shared her everyday occupations at this time, and whose affections were never alienated through the many lonely years which she spent away from her daughter. There was Mme. de la Fayette and Mme. de Lavardin, Mme. de la Troche, whom she called her Trochanire, and who was a most devoted companion, and D'Hacqueville, the best and most obliging of men, who was designated "Les d'Hacqueville" because he was ubiquitous and did more acts of kindness than one man could well accomplish. It was in his coach that Mme. de Grignan first set out on her long journey, and his name occurs at frequent intervals in all Mme. de Sévigné's correspondence. Corbinelli, too, introduced to her by Bussy, whom her daughter called "le Mystique du Diable," was one of the inseparables, and there is always a note of restlessness in her letters when he is not within her reach. He was a man of peculiarly estimable character, of Italian family, a musician, talented and intellectual, but with a strong taste for the calmer joys of life which kept him ever in the background where society was concerned.

Mme. de Sévigné's gay and witty cousin, Emmanuel de Coulanges, and his vivacious wife were almost always with her after Mme. de Grignan's departure, and when circumstances occasioned their absence they were her regular correspondents. *Le petit* Coulanges, as she often called him, was a friend of her childhood's days. He was made Counsellor of *Parlement* but never became a success as a public character. On the other hand he was an excellent epicurean and lived a joyous life until he was eighty-five. Horace Walpole referred to this amiable weak-

ness when giving an account of his own reception at Lord Guilford's place at Wroxton. "You will take me for M. de Coulanges," he said, "*I describe eatables so feelingly!*" Mme. de Coulanges was one of the most delightful among the witty ladies at Court, and held a foremost place in the best society by virtue of her extreme brilliancy and vitality. She was related to Louvois and to Chancellor le Tellier and was a very privileged little person indeed, having the *entrée* to many private receptions at hours reserved for special intimates. In short, she not only made herself loved by, but necessary to those with whom she associated, by virtue of her gaiety and light-heartedness. Mme. de Sévigné called her the fly, the leaf, the sylph and such-like names which suited her exactly, and once when she had been ill, joyful at her recovery, she wrote, "The epigrams are beginning again". The absent-minded Brancas was one of her admirers, as well as the indolent La Fare. M. de la Trousse, the distinguished officer, sought her favours, and her relations with him were very stormy. It was to her that Mme. de Sévigné was indebted for much of the Court news and gossip she delighted in gathering in order to retail it to her daughter.

In 1671, the year following the separation from Mme. de Grignan, Mme. de Sévigné left Paris for the Rochers, accompanied by her son, her uncle, the *Bien-Bon*, and the Abbé de la Mousse with whom she studied Tasso in the original. The time passed quietly enough at first, for she preferred tranquil solitude to the tame provincial society. To shorten the hours De Sévigné read Rabelais aloud, which according to his mother, "made us die of laughter". From the Rochers she went over to Vitré, where she had

a house called the Tour de Sévigné, to be near the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes, Governor of Brittany and his wife, as in this year the *états* were held at Vitré for the first time in sixteen years. The Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes were her intimate friends and she saw a great deal of them both in Paris and at the Rochers. Beneath an appearance of stolidity the Governor of Brittany possessed a fund of intelligence and brightness, a keen capacity for business, dignity, politeness and irreproachable probity. His wife was of lower rank than he, and according to Saint-Simon she had an impossible figure, a coarse face, and the language and phrases of the rabble. They were both very popular and kept princely state at the old château at Vitry. Mme. de Chaulnes was the first to arrive and she visited Mme. de Sévigné, taking with her the Marquis de Pomenars and "La Murinette," better known as Anne-Marie du Piu de Murinais, who later became the Marquise de Kerman. Pomenars was a character. "A most extraordinary creature," wrote Mme. de Sévigné, "I know no one to whom I would so readily wish two heads, for he will never be able to carry his own safe off." She also called him "mad-headed" and declared that "his sprightliness increases in proportion to his criminality, and if one charge more be brought against him he will certainly die with joy". He had already been found guilty of several breaches of the laws and conventions. He was accused of making spurious coin and of carrying off the daughter of the Comte de Créance, and he caused infinite amusement to all his friends and acquaintances by his extraordinary eccentricities.

A few days after this visit the celebrations began,

and Mme. de Sévigné wrote a full account of them to her daughter on 5th August, 1671, giving an excellent picture of the provincial society of that day. "M. de Chaulnes made his entry on Sunday evening with all the noise that Vitré could afford. The next morning he sent me a letter which I answered by going to dine with him. There were two tables in the same room, at one of which M. de Chaulnes presided and his wife at the other. There was a great deal of good cheer, whole dishes were carried away untouched, and the doors were obliged to be made higher to admit the pyramids of fruit. One pyramid with about twenty or thirty pieces of china on it, was so completely overturned at the door that the noise it made silenced our violins, hautboys and trumpets." A week later she was invaded at the Rochers by all these guests. "I saw," she wrote on 12th August, "four carriages and six drive into the court with fifty armed men on horseback, several led horses and a number of mounted pages. These were M. de Chaulnes, M. de Rohan, M. de Lavardin, MM. Coëtlogon, de Lomaria, the Baron de Guais, the Bishops of Rennes and Saint-Malo, the Messieurs d'Argouges and eight or ten more whom I did not know. I forgot M. d'Harouys who is not worth mentioning. I received them all; a great many compliments passed on both sides, and after a walk, with which they were all very well pleased, a very good and elegant collation appeared at one end of the mall and to crown the whole there was Burgundy as plentiful as water. They could not believe it was not the work of enchantment."

That month recorded quite a number of visitors at the Rochers. Mme. de Chaulnes came again with

Mlle. de Murinais, Mme. Fourché and "a very fine girl from Nantes". M. de Chesières stayed in the house and found "all the trees finely grown". M. de Rennes and three other bishops came to dinner and were regaled "with a piece of salt beef". Lomaria made himself conspicuous by "the air of a Mercury in his dancing, his bow and the manner in which he pulls off and puts on his hat, his figure, his face, in short he is quite captivating". In September M. de Lavardin, Lieutenant-General of the Government of Upper and Lower Brittany, came in style to pay a visit with a retinue of twenty gentlemen. "The whole together looked like a little army. Among them were the Lomarias, the Coëtlogons, the Abbé de Feuquières and several others." They walked, they had a light meal, and the Comte des Chapelles assisted in doing the honours of the house.

On her return to Paris in December, 1671, she was welcomed by Mme. de la Fayette, Mme. de Saint-Géran and her friend Mme. de Villars, sister to the Maréchal de Bellefonds. Saint-Simon said of this woman that she was dry, keen, wicked as a serpent and with the devil's own wit. She was considered excellent company, and both she and her husband were good friends to Mme. de Sévigné. As for M. de Villars he was known at Versailles as "Le Bel Orondate"[1] on account of his reputation for courage, good looks, a fine figure and charming manners. Mme. de Sévigné met him once at Mme. de la Fayette's "avec une mine toute pleine d'Orondate". Of Mme. de Villars she wrote, "I am fond of being with her because she enters into my sentiments". Every one spoke well of M. de Villars, and he suc-

[1] One of the heroes of the *Grand Cyrus*.

ceeded everywhere, in war, in embassies, at Court, with the King, with the Queen and with all ladies.

The spring and summer of 1672 were spent by Mme. de Sévigné in Paris amidst domestic surroundings and in an intimate circle. In January she wrote to her daughter: "We sup every evening at Mme. Scarron's. She has a most engaging wit and understanding surprisingly just and clear." The following month Mme. Scarron returned the compliment and came to have supper with the Marquise, who again declared her to be "the most agreeable companion imaginable".

When Mme. de Grignan first went to Provence she left behind her an infant daughter, the little Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar. This little girl, whom her grandmother dearly loved, "reflecting to whom she belonged," was early thrust into a religious vocation from which she never returned into the world. Mme. Scarron, who had a very bewitching way with children, made friends with Marie-Blanche. "She amuses herself and plays with your little girl," wrote Mme. de Sévigné, "she thinks her pretty, and not at all plain. The little one called the Abbé Têtu her papa yesterday." This was the famous Abbé Têtu, known to all the society women of the day, friend of Mme. Scarron and admirer of Mme. de Sévigné who said of him, "he is another of those I have undeceived". She frequently supped with him, and was very much amused when some one said of him, "qu'il servirait fort bien d'âme à une gros corps".

Other friends who visited her about this time were the De Gourvilles, Gilbert de Choiseul, Bishop of Tournai; M. and Mme. de Sully; Mme. du Plessis-Bellière, mother-in-law of the Maréchal de Créquy;

the Comte de Guiche and Godeau, Bishop of Vence, both of whom were old *habitués* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. De Bouc, the first President of the Chambre des Comptes at Aix, called now and again. "He is an honest man," she said with reference to his capabilities, "but I do not think it was he who invented either gunpowder or printing." A special dinner was arranged on his behalf. "M. de Coulanges and I have given a very good dinner to the President de Bouc," wrote Mme. de Sévigné in her letter of 17th February, 1672, "and M. and Mme. de Valavoire, the Bishop of Uzès and Adhémar were of the party; but hear our misfortune. The President, after having promised to be with us, came to excuse himself, having urgent business at Saint-Germain. We thought we should have hanged ourselves; however, we did as well as we could. Mme. de la Valavoire brought Buzanval with her; but the President was the chief object of our desire. The dinner was good, genteel and magnificent. In short, it was an irreparable loss. De Bouc may return perhaps; but the dinner will not." A few days later another dinner was given by the Valavoires which eclipsed the former one, "not by the quantity but by the extreme rarity of the dishes".

In spite of this amiable rivalry the host and hostess were declared to be the best people in the world.

Interspersed with these homely details are accounts of dramatic readings to the Cardinal de Retz, of whom Mme. de Sévigné saw a good deal during his last years in Paris. Her letters frequently mention this relative, his disinterestedness, his charming conversation, his good-nature and kindness. She called him "le heros du bréviare," in distinction to Turenne who

was "le heros de l'epée". As was frequently the case where her mother's special friends were concerned, Mme. de Grignan had a strong objection to the Cardinal. "We do all in our power to amuse our good Cardinal," wrote the Marquise in March, 1672. "Corneille has read him a play which is to be performed shortly and which reminds me of the beauties of the ancients. Molière is to read him his *Trissotin* (the *Femmes Savantes*) on Saturday. It is extremely diverting. Despréaux will give him his *Lutrin* and his *Poétique*. This is all we can do for him." "I am mad over Corneille," she declared in the same letter, "he is going to give us his *Pulchérie*."

Presently a new stream of visitors was introduced: Mme. de Coetquen, Mme. de Castelnau, who was "by herself, like a turtle-dove mourning her absent mate," Mme. de Verneuil, "handsome and well-shaped" and "not so red and bloated as she used to be," Mme. de la Troche, who was so changeable, so agitated, "the waves are not more uncertain than her conduct towards me, she is pleased and displeased ten times a week". The poor "Trochanire" was jealous of Mme. de Sévigné's friendship for Mme. de la Fayette, but on the 12th of May, 1672, she was invited to dinner in company with the Abbé Arnauld, brother of M. de Pomponne and M. de Varennes, and peace was reinstated.

Mme. de Sévigné was now settled in her new house in the Rue St. Anastase, whither she had removed from the Rue de Thorigny; "a little house which I love," she wrote to Mme. de Grignan, "because it seems as though it was only made to give me the joy of receiving you both".

The society in which she now moved, composed

of friends and acquaintances, both business and social, continued to increase, until it became exceedingly numerous and included almost everybody who was anybody in Paris and some people who were somebody elsewhere. Among those who kept more or less regularly in touch with her, beyond many already mentioned, were La Grande Mademoiselle, the Condés, the Duchesses de Rohan, d'Arpajon and de Gesvres, the Duras, the Charosts, the Louvignys, the Comte de Sansei and his wife, De Beuvron, Barillon, Turpin de Crissé and the Beringhens; soldiers such as Dangeau and the Comte de Sault, men of the robe such as D'Ormesson, one of Fouquet's judges, the Président Amelot, the Colberts, the D'Avaux and the De Mesmes.

Of women friends she had legion; the Comtesse de Fiesque, wild and thoughtless until the day she died, the handsome Mme. de Vauvineux who was called Vauvinette, the Comtesse d'Olonne, the Marquise de Courcelles, Mme. de Puisieux, Mme. de Thianges who became *dévote* and abandoned rouge, for "rouge is the law and the prophets; it is on rouge that the very foundation of Christianity rests," Mme. de Marans who lost favour because she spoke evil of Mme. de Grignan's affection for her own brother-in-law, the womenfolk of men friends, the women at Court, those who came from the provinces after being in the company of her daughter, and others whose names it would be unprofitable to mention since the list could never be complete. Her letters were full of such phrases as "M. de Julianis called upon me yesterday," "Abbé de Vins found me with Father Mascaron whom I had invited to dinner," "Almost all your friends took the oppor-

tunity of coming to see me, M. d'Ormesson, for instance, and many others of the same stamp who crowd around me to get a remembrance from you". And then there were suppers in the company of Mlle. de Lenclos, Mme. de la Sablière, Mlle. de Fiennes, Mme. de Salins and Mme. de Montsoreau, or dinners with M. de la Rochefoucauld, Mme. de Brissac and Benserade, who was always the life of the company,or with the Marquise d'Uxelles, Mmes. d'Humières, de Frontenac, d'Outrelaise, Raimond, Martin, M. de Vindisgras, the De Béthunes, Guilleragues, Langlade and the Abbé de la Victoire.

In spite of these social distractions and a projected journey to Grignan, which eventually took place in the month of July, 1672, she had time to show her continued interest, not only in her little granddaughter Marie-Blanche, and Bussy's son Aimé Nicolas de Bussy-Rabutin, who was studying at the College of Clermont in Paris, but also in her poor sick aunt, Mme. de la Trousse, whose death after a serious illness at length set her free to take the long-promised visit to her daughter.

This visit lasted until the autumn of 1673. In October of that year she stayed at Bourbilly, "the old mansion of her fathers," where, according to her account, she found her beautiful fields, her little river, her magnificent woods and her fine mill in the same places in which she left them. The Comte de Guitaud, whose estate, the Château of Epoisses, was close to Bourbilly, visited her with his wife and the Comtesse de Fiesque. On the 2nd of November Mme. de Sévigné reached Paris, having been four weeks on the journey from Grignan. She was heartily welcomed by all her old friends and found

several of them at her house on her arrival, namely, M. de Coulanges, M. de Rarai, Mme. de Sansei, Mme. de Bagnols, M. le Tellier (the Archbishop of Rheims), Mme. Scarron, La Garde, the Abbés de Grignan and Têtu. D'Hacqueville, Mme. de la Fayette and La Rochefoucauld were there as a matter of course. The round of visits began afresh. M. and Mme. de Noailles, Mesdames de Leuville and d'Effiat, Mme. de Monaco and Mme. de Louvigny, respectively sister and sister-in-law of the Comte de Guiche, M. de Marsillac, son of La Rochefoucauld, M. de Vivonne and the De Beuvrons were amongst the friends she saw within a month or so of her return.

M. du Janet, who was much attached to the De Grignan family, arrived from Provence at the close of December, and everybody called again to hear the latest news of the absent favourite. La Garde, l'Abbé de Grignan, le Chevalier de Buous, the *Bien-Bon*, Coulanges, Corbinelli and other intimate friends stormed her apartments before eight o'clock in the morning, and, as Mme. de Sévigné wrote to her daughter, were "all talking, reasoning and reading your accounts which are indeed admirable". A few days later some "great folks" called. These were the *Grandmaître* and the *Charmant*, namely, the Comte de Lude and the Marquis de Villeroy. Of the latter Saint-Simon said: "He was a man made on purpose to preside at a ball; to be the judge at a *carrousel*, and (if he had had any voice) to have sung at the opera in the parts of kings and heroes; perfect as to his dress and for setting the fashion, but having nothing else in him". These worthies discussed the possibilities of war in the presence of M.

de la Trousse, M. Charost, the Archbishop of Rheims, and Brancas.

Charles Comte de Brancas was gentleman-in-waiting to Queen Anne of Austria, and was a remarkable person whose fits of absent-mindedness were notorious. La Bruyère was said to have taken him as a model for his character of Ménalque. Mme. de Sévigné tells more than one amusing story in her letters of the strange situations into which his peculiarities led him. One day he was overturned into a ditch, "where he found himself so much at his ease, that he asked those who came to help him out if they had any occasion for his services. His glasses were broken and his head would have been so too if he had not been more lucky than wise; but all this did not seem to have destroyed his reverie in the least. I wrote this morning," she continued, winding up her story, "to let him know he had been overturned, and was very near breaking his neck, as I supposed he was the only person in Paris who was ignorant of it; and that I took the opportunity of expressing the concern it gave me."

Another evening Brancas and she had a quarrel, which she related in her usual happy style. "He pretended I had made use of an indecorous expression relating to friendship; nobody heard it, not even I myself: this was crowning the insult; he flung out of the room in a violent passion." Only a Brancas could have criticised the remarks on friendship of one so thoroughly well qualified to discuss the subject as Mme. de Sévigné!

The beginning of 1674 opened gaily, and in February Mme. de Grignan arrived in Paris, to remain there until May, 1675. When she left, the

separation caused, as usual, the greatest grief to the temporarily bereaved mother, and on this occasion the sympathy of her friends did little to alleviate her suffering. "They are too solicitous about me," she wrote soon after her daughter's departure, "they harass me." Probably the feeling was only temporary, for she presently wrote to Bussy, "With my mode of life you are sufficiently acquainted. I pass my time with five or six female friends whose society pleases me, and in the performance of a thousand necessary duties, and that is no small affair."

Another great grief was in store for her in 1675, when the death of Turenne took place. He was "the greatest captain and the most honest man of all the world," and she could not forget that he had once adored her.

Towards the end of the year Mme. de Sévigné went to stay at the Rochers. It was autumn, rather desolate, and there were but few visitors, so that she was thrown upon her own resources and dependent on her own society through many solitary evenings. But they did not depress her, and she was happy in her own peaceful manner; a very different manner to that of Mme. du Deffand who preferred to be in a crowd of people for whom she did not care a snap of the fingers than to endure an hour's loneliness. Mme. de Sévigné on the contrary could always be content. "Those evenings, which you are anxious about, my daughter, alas! I pass them without dullness," she wrote. "I nearly always have to write, or else I read, and insensibly midnight comes. The Abbé leaves me at ten, and the two hours I remain alone do not kill me any more than the others." One good friend, however, she had in the Princesse

de Tarente who lived at the Château Madame near Vitré. The "bonne Tarente," as Mme. de Sévigné always called her, was the daughter of William V., Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, and the widow of the Duc de la Trémouille, Prince de Tarente and first Baron of Brittany. In spite of the great differences between these two women, namely those of country (the Princess was of German origin), language, religion, birth, rank, habits and manners, one great bond of sympathy united them, the love of each for her own absent daughter, so that material for conversation always existed and mutual interest never languished. "I have been to visit the good princess," wrote Mme. de Sévigné on 2nd October, 1675; "she received me with transport. Her opinion of you shows she has not altogether the taste of a German; she is pleased with your person and with what she has seen of your mind. She does not want sense in her way; she loves her daughter and this fills her days: she tells me how much she suffers in her absence and speaks to me as to the only person who understands her trouble;" and then at the conclusion of the same letter, "I forgot to tell you that the good Tarente returned my visit two days after I had been to see her. It made quite a stir in the country." A few days later the "bonne Tarente" returned and spent a long day at the Rochers to Mme. de Sévigné's delight. "Her birth methinks entitles her to respect from those who know the world," she wrote. "She has a romantic style in everything she relates, and I am surprised that some should be displeased with it even among those who love romances." The Princess presented her with the "prettiest little dog in the world," a spaniel, but

she feared it would claim too much of her affection to the detriment of her old pet dog, Marphise.

Horace Walpole, when reading Mme. de Sévigné's letters, was particularly struck by one of her best *bon mots* relating to the Princess, and recounted it to Richard Bentley. "Do you remember," he inquired in his letter from Arlington Street on 20th November, 1754, "her German friend the Princess of Tarente, who was always in mourning for some sovereign, prince or princess? One day Madame de Sévigné happening to meet her in colours, made her a low curtsey, and said, 'Madame, je me rejouis de la santé de l'Europe'. I think I may apply another of her speeches, which pleased me," he continued, "to what I have said to you in the former part of my letter. Mademoiselle du Plessis had said something she disapproved; Madame Sévigné said to her, 'Mais que cela est sot, car je veux vous parler doucement'."

Mlle. du Plessis was somewhat of a thorn in the side of our good Marquise and had been so since her childhood, when Mme. de Grignan, then also a child, had struck her little companion, and the mother of the wilful aggressor had felt urged to make some tactful excuse about the roughness of their play. Mme. de Sévigné's remarks about her all bore a tinge of malice, perhaps with the intention of amusing Mme. de Grignan. "Mademoiselle du Plessis is exactly as you represent her," she wrote, "or if possible rather more foolish;" and again, "The Divine Plessis is false in everything. I do her too great an honour in abusing her. She acts all kinds of parts, the *dévote*, the knowing person, the fastidious one, the most good-natured in the world; but above all she apes me, so that she always causes

me about as much pleasure as if I saw myself in a mirror which made me ridiculous and spoke to an echo which would answer my follies." Mlle. du Plessis came of an old family who lived in the Château d'Argentré, three miles from the Rochers. Her father sometimes went to Mme. de Sévigné's house to have a game of reversi, but her mother lived a very retired life and left her daughter to cultivate the society of their high-bred neighbour, who grew so accustomed to the young lady's presence that at length it embarrassed her no more than the proximity of her maid or of her lap-dog.

Having spent the winter at the Rochers, Mme. de Sévigné returned to Paris in April, 1676, giving the usual opportunity to her friends to celebrate her return. But she was soon to leave them again. She had suffered from a severe rheumatic illness and travelled to Vichy in order to take the waters. Before leaving Paris she gave a farewell supper to Mme. de Coulanges and her husband, Mme. de la Troche, M. de la Trousse, Mlle. de Montgeron and Corbinelli who "are coming to bid me farewell by eating a pigeon-pie". Later she added, "My company has just left me. Mesdames de Pomponne, de Vins, de Villars and Saint-Géran have been here; I have embraced them all for you." Mme. de Vins was the sister of Mme. de Pomponne and had much influence with her brother-in-law. The Comtesse de Saint-Géran was an intimate friend of the Marquise de Villars and a devotee to the gaieties at Court.

At Vichy Mme. de Sévigné was surrounded by friends and gave a very spirited account of her life there. At six in the morning they all met at the

spring where "one drinks and makes a very ugly face". At twelve they dined and afterwards paid visits to one another. On the day upon which it was Mme. de Sévigné's turn to receive company, Mme. de Brissac, "the handsome coquette," played at ombre with Saint-Hérem and Plancy, whilst Mme. de Sévigné herself read *Ariosto* with the "Chanoinesse," Mme. de Longueval, friend of the Duchesse de Brissac, sister of the Maréchale d'Estrées and Canoness of Remiremont, who was very fond of Italian and liked the Marquise exceedingly. Two or three young ladies of the neighbourhood came with a flute and danced a *bourée* very prettily. At five o'clock the party took a walk in the delightful country, at seven there was light supper, and at ten every one went to bed.

"At length we arrived here," wrote Mme. de Sévigné to her daughter on 1st July, 1676, from Paris after her stay at Vichy. "I found at my gate Mmes. de Villars, de Saint-Géran and d'Heudicourt, who asked me *when I was expected*, for they were at that instant come to inquire. A moment afterwards came M. de la Rochefoucauld, Mme. de la Sablière by chance, the Coulanges, Sansei and D'Hacqueville. . . . I have received numerous visits these two days." She was to receive a good many more throughout the month. On the 3rd she wrote, "a delightful party has just left me; it consisted of the Maréchale d'Estrées, the 'Chanoinesse,' Bussy, Rouville and Corbinelli . . . you never saw a party more lively"; and on the 6th, "The Marquise de Castelnau and her daughter are very attentive to me. . . . Last night I saw the Cardinal de Bouillon, Caumartin and Barillon."

In August Mme. de Sévigné went to Livry for a month or two. Livry was easily accessible from Paris, so that visitors were by no means scarce, and she had to guard herself against being taken by surprise. "Mesdames de Villars, de Saint-Géran, d'Heudicourt, Mlle. Lestrange, the *little soul* and the little ambassadress came here yesterday at noon," she wrote on 14th August, "the weather was charming. A slight suspicion of their intention occasioned a slight degree of providence on my part, which furnished an excellent dinner. I have a very good cook." Mme. d'Heudicourt was often called the "tall woman". She spoke ill about this time of Mme. de Maintenon and a quarrel occurred between them. "I was yesterday evening in the avenue which leads to this place," continued Mme. de Sévigné a few days later, "when I saw a coach and six advancing towards us, and who should it contain but the good Maréchale d'Estrées, the 'Chanoinesse,' the Marquise de Senneterre, whom the Abbé de la Victoire calls the Mite, and the fat Abbé de Pontcarré. We had a great deal of chat, walked, supped, and at last my company set out by the light of my old friend the moon."

At the end of the month Mme. de Sévigné made a rush visit to Paris, but was back in Livry at the beginning of September. M. d'Hacqueville and Mme. de Vins spent a night at Livry, "they came like good creatures as they were to see us yesterday; they are excellent companions; you know how well we all agree together. Brancas is come too." Still a few days later she extolled her solitude, "I am delighted to be alone; I walk out, I amuse myself with reading and work, and I go to church; in short

MADAME DE GRIGNAN

I ask pardon of the company I expect, but I own I do wondrous well without them". Another invasion took place speedily, however, instigated this time by M. and Mme. de Mesmes, M. de Richelieu, Mme. de Toisy and "a little girl who sings".

Towards the end of 1676 Mme. de Grignan arrived at Paris, her mother having returned from Livry to receive her. This visit lasted until June, 1677. In the autumn of that year Mme. de Sévigné made another journey to Vichy where she had several friends taking the waters, among them De Termes, De Flamarens and De Jussac, whom she called her "messmates". Reference was made in nearly all her letters of this period to *la Carnavalette*, namely the Hôtel de Carnavalet, a residence for which D'Hacqueville was carrying on negotiations on her behalf. At the beginning of October the arrangements were completed and Mme. de Sévigné returned to Paris to enter into possession of her new abode.

The Hôtel de Carnavalet was a fine mansion situated at the corner of the Rue Culture and Neuve-Sainte-Catherine (now Rue de Sévigné). The hôtel had been begun in 1544, and bore the name of the family who built it, but it passed into the hands of a M. d'Agaurry who had it finished by François Mansard. Mme. de Sévigné's actual predecessor was a Mme. de Lillebonne, daughter of the Duke of Lorraine. The house formed the four sides of a quadrangle, the buildings being two storeys high. The architecture was plain, but harmonious and both exterior and interior were decorated with sculpture by Jean Goujon. The apartments were handsome and spacious with floors of

stone. Mme. de Sévigné arranged that she and Mme. de Grignan should have the upper floor and M. de Grignan and his daughters were to be accommodated on the ground-floor. "It is an admirable affair," she wrote, "there is room for us all, and we shall have a healthy situation. As it is impossible to find everything, we must be satisfied without the inlaid floors, and the small mantelpieces now in fashion. But we shall at least have a fine courtyard, a large garden and be in the best part of the city." "The Hôtel de Carnavalet near the Place Royale, is worth looking at, even for the façade, as you drive by," wrote Walpole to the Hon. H. S. Conway in 1774, just a century later; and again to George Selwyn, "The Hôtel de Carnavalet sends its blessings to you. I never pass it without saying an Ave Maria de Rabutin-Chantal, grâtia plena." When in 1765 he called upon Mme. Chabot he found her not at home, "but the Hôtel de Carnavalet was; and I stopped on purpose to say an Ave Maria before it. It is a very singular building, not at all in the French style, and looks like an *ex voto* raised to her honour by some of her foreign votaries. I don't think her honoured half enough in her own country."

Preparations went on apace for the reception of Mme. de Grignan who was to arrive at the end of October. Mme. de Sévigné, who had been staying with Mme. de Coulanges, spent a few days at Livry before installing herself in her new domain. Thither Mme. de Coulanges, the Abbé Têtu and the good Corbinelli accompanied her, and Mlle. de Méri followed the party. The latter was the daughter of the Marquise de la Trousse and was by no means an

amiable person. She always accepted Mme. de Sévigné's kindnesses with rebuffs and lamentations.

Her new house being still in a state of chaos when Mme. de Sévigné returned to Paris, she had perforce to receive visits from the La Rochefoucaulds and the Tarentes in the open air, generally in the courtyard and sometimes seated on the pole of her carriage. At length, however, all was ready to receive Mme. de Grignan, even the diet was arranged which was to agree with her now delicate state of health. "I dine in a wholesome manner," Mme. de Sévigné assured her daughter, "and if foolish people would have me sup just after dinner, at six, before my dinner is digested, I laugh at their proposal, and leave it alone till eight, but on what do you think I sup? Why, on a quail or at most the wing of a partridge." "Moreover," she added, in another letter, "the regimen which your Grignans prescribe for you, is my ordinary fare. I agree with Guisoni to banish all *ragoûts*." This letter, written on 27th October, was the last before her daughter's arrival, and the visit lasted nearly two years, Mme. de Grignan returning to Provence in September, 1679.

Fresh names still continued to appear upon the list of Mme. de Sévigné's friends. She mentioned about this time Mme. de Mouci and Mme. de Belin, with whom she was acquainted through Mme. de Lavardin, the "Chevalier" Talbot, an English doctor who performed wonderful cures, Mesdames de Vence, de Tourette, de Marbeuf, Father Morel, Saint-Aubin, Mme. de Nesmond, M. and Mme. de Moreuil, Mme. de Saint-Pouanges and Mme. de la Ferté. All the old friends remained faithful, but a temporary gap occurred in their ranks owing to

the disgrace of M. de Pomponne in November, 1679, which was a great grief to Mme. de Sévigné, although at the beginning of the following year she was able to rejoice because "Pomponne has become one of us again". Thus the old routine continued in Paris, whilst Mme. de Grignan in Provence was indulging in *petits soupers particuliers* to which she invited eighteen or twenty women. Perhaps it was the contrast between her own well-ordered days and her daughter's life of ceaseless gaiety which occasioned Mme. de Sévigné to write in February, 1680, "I still lead the same old life you know so well, either at the Faubourg [*i.e.* Mme. de la Fayette's] or with the good widows; sometimes here; sometimes eating the chicken of Mme. de Coulanges and always happy to think I am gliding down the stream of time towards the happy moment when I shall see you again".

Early in the same year great rejoicing took place in the De Grignan family on account of excellent appointments obtained by M. de Grignan's two younger brothers, and the hope was awakened that the King's favour might be extended on De Grignan's own behalf, for his pecuniary embarrassments continually increased, owing to the great expenses necessitated by keeping up an appearance of great state in Provence.

Mme. de Sévigné's friends flocked around her to show their delight at this piece of family luck. Corbinelli and La Mousse, Mesdames de Lavardin, de Mouci, d'Uxelles, "and twenty others whose names I have forgotten, have been here to congratulate me and to desire me to inform you how much they are interested in the good fortune that has

befallen your family," she wrote to her daughter on this occasion.

The excitement subsided, Mme. de Sévigné set out for Livry, and in her letter of 6th March gave a glimpse into domestic life there. "We are all here," she said, "the good Abbé of the Abbey, M. de Rennes, the Abbé de Piles and M. de Coulanges. I wanted Corbinelli to join us. He has remained in Paris in order to be present at the wedding of M. Mandat's son. Our time does not hang at all heavily upon our hands; we walk, chat, play at chess or at cards occasionally, read the *petites lettres* of Pascal, some plays and *La Princesse de Clèves* [Mme. de la Fayette's novel], which I make our parsons read who are highly delighted with it; we keep a good house, *le petit* Coulanges has his song-book with him; in short we are as merry as possible; he is gay, he eats, he drinks, he sings."

On her return to Paris, Mme. de la Fayette claimed the whole of her attention. M. de la Rochefoucauld was at death's door, and the woman who had befriended him closely for many years could not be otherwise than in need of consolation.

It was impossible, however, for Mme. de Sévigné to ignore for long the ceaseless round of visits. Mesdames de Richelieu, de Rochefort and Scarron (now Mme. de Maintenon) showed her great civilities, the latter paid several visits, and during one of them Mme. de Soubise "burst in upon us," as Mme. de Sévigné expressed it; Mme. du Guénégaud and Mme. de Kerman also called and Mme. de Vins, "who," she continued, "wished to hear the news of my journey and came to dine 'snugly' with me. She chatted for a long time with Corbinelli and La

Mousse; the conversation was sublime and entertaining. Bussy's share was far from being the worst. We went to pay some calls and then parted." The good feeling which now existed between Bussy and his cousin was never again to be disturbed in his lifetime.

Although Mme. de Sévigné always retained her interest in what was going on at Court, and obtained most of her Court news from Mme. de Coulanges before despatching her letters to her daughter, she was rarely seen there. On the 28th of March, however, she went in the company of Mme. de Chaulnes and saw the Dauphiness, "whose plainness," she declared, "is not at all disgusting or unpleasant; her face indeed but ill-becomes her, but her wit suits her admirably. Everything she says or does shows a great share of it. She has a penetrating eye and is extremely quick of apprehension." Mme. de Sévigné, however, no longer cared for the excitement and bustle of Court life. "It is by no means a place for me," she admitted in April; "I am past the time of life to wish for any settlement there. If I were young I should take pleasure in rendering myself agreeable to the Princess; but what right have I to think of returning there?"

The early spring of 1680 was spent in Paris. La Rochefoucauld was dead, likewise Cardinal de Retz; Fouquet had succumbed after his long imprisonment. Otherwise there were few changes. Mme. de Sévigné wrote to her daughter almost daily. Her expressions of affection never weakened for an instant and this interchange of letters was now, as ever, the most important thing in life, everything being dependent on fortuitous despatch

and receipt of correspondence. "There are M. la Garde, my son, Corbinelli and La Troche," she wrote on 17th April, 1680, "who show me no sort of respect, because I have received a letter from you and they think I dare not be angry;" and again, two days later, "I wrote you last Wednesday very confusedly, having several persons round me who deafened me with their clamour". Society meant sacrifice to the Marquise if it entailed any interruption in the communion with her best-beloved child.

At the end of May a move was made to the Rochers, and there she remained until late in the autumn. The early summer passed quietly enough, but great festivities took place in August when Mme. de Sévigné accompanied the Princesse de Tarente to Rennes, where they were received with great honours by M. de Chaulnes. "He sent forty of his guards to a distance of a league to meet the aunt of Madame," wrote Mme. de Sévigné, describing the scene. "Shortly afterwards followed Mme. de Marbeuf, two presidents, several friends of the Princess and last of all the Duc de Chaulnes, the Bishop of Rennes, Messieurs de Coëtlogon, de Tonquedec, de Beaucé, de Quercado, de Crapodo, de Keriquimini, in short *un drapello eletto* [a chosen band]. Suddenly there is a full stop; they bow, they curtsey, they salute, they embrace, they cling together with perspiration and then separate without knowing what they say or do. Presently the trumpets sound, the drums beat; they enter the city, in the midst of a crowd of people, who are bursting with desire to halloo forth something. I make a notion to alight at Madame de Chaulnes's; this was agreed to, and we found her in company with at least forty women

of quality, married and unmarried; not one of them but had a title, being for the most part the *shes* belonging to the *hes* who had come to meet us. I have forgotten to tell you, that there were six coaches and six, and above ten coaches and four. But to return to the ladies. I found three or four of my daughters-in-law among them,[1] with faces as red as fire, so much they dreaded seeing me; and yet, to do them justice, there was not one of them who did not seem to deserve a much better husband than your brother would make. Here we all saluted again, both male and female; in short there was strange confusion, the Princess showed me the way, and I followed in exact time. Cheek was now given to cheek in the most perfect union." Then the company returned to the carriages and set off to Mme. de Marbeuf's to dress. "I decked myself out to such advantage," continued Mme. de Sévigné, "that I quite eclipsed my daughters-in-law in beauty; in short the *grandmotherly* dignity was very well supported. We then returned to Mme. de Chaulnes's, and she came to fetch us with all her court; there we found everything in most excellent order, an infinite number of lights and two long tables elegantly covered with sixteen dishes each, to which every one present sat down; and in this way they pass every evening. . . . I shall always have the same things to tell you during our stay here; a superb dinner, a magnificent supper, music, dancing, and all the parade of royalty, from which you will conclude that the Government of Brittany is a very fine one."

After nearly a week of such festivities, Mme. de

[1] *I.e.*, ladies to whom the young Marquis de Sévigné had paid marked attention when last in Brittany.

Sévigné quitted the "whirlpool at Rennes" which exceeded everything of the kind she had ever met with, "because being confined within a less compass, its force was the more violent". "At length I am in the solitude of my woods," she wrote from the Rochers, "enjoying the silence and abstinence I have so long wished for." Towards the close of the month her son arrived and brought with him the Bishop of Rennes, a marquis, a friend of M. de Lavardin's and the Abbé Charier, son of an old friend at Lyons. The house immediately became more animated, for the Marquis de Sévigné was always good company. The Princess came from Vitré and her visits were returned. Card-tables made their appearance at the Rochers, and M. du Plessis and the Princess joined the Marquis de Sévigné in a game of ombre. The Marquise played reversi, but in her heart of hearts she preferred to see that her guests were occupied and then to slip away alone to inspect a new shady walk she was just having made, "as long as the longest," which was called the Hermitage and where the "print of my footsteps amount to nearly twelve hundred a day". All the time she was full of longing and expectation that Mme. de Grignan would come to stay at the Hôtel de Carnavalet for the winter. But the time for such thoughts was curtailed by a further influx of visitors, so that she was forced to join in the general gaiety. "M. de Montmoron came," she wrote on 15th September, "you know he has a great deal of wit; Father Damaie, who does not live quite a hundred miles from this place; my son, who you know is a perfect master of disputation; and Corbinelli's letters, *making together four*. I listen to them and they all conspire to divert and

amuse me." A good deal of card-playing went on for the sake of a lady visitor from Vitré, and Mme. de Marbeuf "makes one at any thing out of pure good nature and complaisance. The Princess enlivens this retreat like another Galatea," and Corneille, Boileau, Sarrasin, and Voiture, whose works were chosen to entertain the company, had "all the air of novelty".

In October the Marquis de Sévigné was taken ill, and this necessitated a return to Paris. Mlle. de Méri and the Chevalier de Grignan were occupying the Hôtel de Carnavalet. Mme. de Sévigné chatted a good deal with the former every evening and was pleased to see her unwonted cheerfulness. "Ah, my dear child," she wrote to her daughter, "how easy it is for any one to live with me! how far will a little complaisance and sociability, or even the appearance of confidence, lead me! I believe no one in the world is more readily pleased in domestic life than myself." Perhaps there was an undercurrent of meaning in these phrases, for it was an open secret that certain differences of temperament had led to unpleasantness between mother and daughter, regretted by both, but which neither could avert when close companionship lasted for too long.

After Mme. de Grignan's arrival in Paris in November, 1680, there was no further separation until 1684, when Mme. de Sévigné went to the Rochers. In the autumn of 1682 she spent a few weeks at Livry with her daughter, with the good Abbé, with Mademoiselle de Grignan and the little de Grignans, and for part of the time with her son and the Chevalier de Grignan.

In February, 1684, the Marquis de Sévigné married Mlle. de Brehant de Mauron at Rennes, a very good match for him, but one which gave rise to difficult business negotiations in which Mme. de Grignan played an unamiable part. Mme. de Sévigné was obliged to present the Rochers as a wedding-gift to her son, and when she left her daughter in Paris and went to pay a visit to the young couple in the autumn of 1684, it was obvious from her letters to Mme. de Grignan that it troubled her deeply to be no longer the mistress of the home she had loved so well, and to suffer the attentions of others without being in a position to make arrangements for herself as of old. Troubles, too, were accumulating at the Hôtel de Carnavalet. It was all that the De Grignans could do to keep up even an appearance of affluence. Poverty and anxiety were undermining the house in spite of outward show, a large retinue of servants, rich furnishings, and a hospitable table. After persistent demands Mme. de Grignan obtained for her husband a grant of 12,000 francs from the King, but Mme. de Sévigné, aware that, in spite of this, retrenchment was necessary, stayed on at the Rochers, although heartbroken to remain so long away from her daughter. During this visit the Rochers was very quiet and time passed in reading, conversation and a few calls from provincial neighbours. A dinner at the Princesse de Tarente's was quite an event, and Mme. de Sévigné gave an account of it in detail, describing even her costume, in order to amuse her correspondent. "This is the way in which your mother was dressed," she wrote. "I wore a good warm dressing-gown which you despised, though a very pretty one,

and the violet-coloured skirt, embroidered with gold and silver, which in jest I used to call a petticoat, with a handsome undress morning-cap. I was really extremely well got up. But I found the Princess dressed much in the same style and I was satisfied on that point," and the letter ended a little pathetically. "Tell me what you wear; it will be something for my imagination to dwell upon."

Mme. de Sévigné returned to Paris in August, 1685, and was in the company of her daughter, with only one short interval, until October, 1688. Her whole attention was engrossed by the affairs of the De Grignan family. Trouble arose with Mme. de Grignan's two step-daughters, and this resulted in their wealth, inherited from their mother, M. de Grignan's first wife, being placed in M. and Mme. de Grignan's hands. Anxiety had also been occasioned by the young Marquis de Grignan's first acquaintance with warfare at the age of sixteen. His sister Blanche-Marie had long been sacrificed to a conventual existence, and it took all Mme. de Sévigné's tact to rescue her second granddaughter, the charming Pauline, from a similar fate. These family affairs hindered her somewhat from entertaining and visiting as much as usual, but she did not neglect to dine with Mme. de la Fayette, to sup with the Coulanges and the Duchesse de Chaulnes, to keep up an intimate intercourse with Mme. de Verneuil, the Duchesse de Lude, Mme. de Lavardin who was growing very old, the Marquise d'Uxelles, Mme. de Mouci and Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucauld. Her letters at this period described the doings of the young Marquis, her grandson, who was in Paris in 1689, and she rejoiced in showing him off

before her friends, whose names were freely scattered throughout the pages of her correspondence, among them M. de Lamoignon, and M. de Troyes, Mlle. de Goileau, the Abbé de Polignac, the Abbé de Rohan, his doctor, Abbé David—a company of wits—and the faithful Corbinelli, Pomponne, M. de Barillon, the Abbé Têtu who remained evergreen, Mme. de Bagnols, M. and Mme. d'Estrées, the Maréchale de Bellefonds, Mme. de Saint-Germain, M. Courtin and M. de la Trousse.

In the middle of April, 1689, Mme. de Sévigné left Paris for Chaulnes and Rennes, arriving in the latter place early in May, where she stayed with her good friend the Marquise de Marbeuf. She was "lodged like a real Princesse de Tarente in a handsome chamber, hung with fine crimson velvet and ornamented like one at Paris". She had a very gay time at Rennes. "I had visitors in the evening," she wrote, "M. and Mme. de Chaulnes, Mme. de Kerman, M. de Rennes, M. de Saint-Malo, M. de Revel, Tonquedec and several other illustrious Bretons, male and female." Then came another visit to the Rochers and a quiet time alone with her daughter-in-law. "We lead so regular a life," she wrote in June, "that it is scarcely possible to be ill. We rise at eight and I often walk till nine, when the bell rings for Mass, to breathe the fresh air in the woods: after Mass we dress, bid each other good-day, return and gather orange-flowers, dine, and work or read till five. . . ." Then she left her daughter-in-law, and retired "to these delightful groves, with a servant who follows me," taking books, changing the route and varying the walks "At length," she continued, "about eight o'clock I

hear a bell. This is the summons to supper; I am sometimes at a good distance, I join the Marquise on her beautiful lawn and we are a little society to each other; we sup in the dusk; I return with her to the *Place Coulanges*, in the midst of the orange-trees and view with an envious eye the awful gloom through the beautiful iron gate which you have never seen; I long to be there, but feel that it would not be prudent. I prefer this life infinitely to that of Rennes; is it not a fit solitude for a person who should think of her salvation, and who either is or would be a Christian?"

Among the occasional visitors who called at the Rochers was a M. de la Faluère, his wife, daughter and son, who were delighted with the beautiful estate, but as the autumn advanced towards winter, the country became lonely and deserted, and Mme. de Sévigné's friends did their best to persuade her to return to Paris. Mme. de la Fayette went so far as to write her a letter giving in very plain terms an offer of pecuniary help. "You are old," she began, "and the Rochers are surrounded with woods; colds and coughs will destroy you; you will grow dull, your mind will lose its energy and will decay: all this is certain, and worldly affairs are nothing in comparison to what I tell you." According to arrangements, Mme. de Sévigné was to go to M. de Chaulnes's house, "for your own will not be prepared to receive you and you will have no horses," a thousand crowns were to be put at her disposal, to be lent without interest by "persons who are not afraid of losing their money," and she was to agree to these conditions or renounce the friendship of Mme. de la Fayette, of Mme. de Chaulnes and Mme. de Lavardin.

Mme. de Sévigné refused these kind-hearted commands pointblank, however, and stayed at the Rochers until October, 1690, when she bid farewell for ever to the old home where she had spent so many happy hours. It was her last visit to Brittany. From thence she went to Grignan, after a visit to her son and daughter-in-law, which had extended over sixteen months. It was her intention to return to Paris with Mme. de Grignan in the following year.

On her arrival in Provence she received a particularly hearty welcome from her daughter and her son-in-law. The magnificence of their surroundings and position had greatly increased and she saw clearly in which direction M. de Grignan's fortune had flowed. "I will entertain you some day," she wrote to Bussy on 13th November, 1690, "with an account of the grandeur of the house and the beauty and magnificence of the furniture."

At the close of 1691 Mme. de Sévigné and the De Grignan family were once more at the Hôtel de Carnavalet, but the end was drawing nigh. During her daughter's stay in Paris Mme. de Sévigné lost two of her dearest friends, Mme. de la Fayette and Bussy, who both died in 1693. She herself was ageing quickly.

At the beginning of 1694 Mme. de Grignan returned to Provence in order to arrange the marriage of her son, and she was speedily followed by Mme. de Sévigné, who left Paris on 11th May of that year never to return. The light of the presiding genius at the Hôtel de Carnavalet was extinguished from the day that last wearisome journey to Provence was undertaken.

During her latter years Mme. de Sévigné had

been troubled, sad and lonely, with fortunes which diminished in proportion to the aggrandisement of those of her children. In the last year of her life two family events occurred which must have greatly pleased her; first, the marriage of the Marquis de Grignan to Mlle. de Saint-Amand on 2nd January, 1695, the bride's father paying all the De Grignan debts, and thus dispersing the troubles which had threatened that family for years, and, secondly, at the close of the same year, the marriage of her granddaughter Pauline to the Marquis de Simiane. This marriage took place under gloomy auspices. Mme. de Grignan was seriously ill and unable to be present, and her disease presaged still greater grief, for, owing to the strain undergone while nursing her daughter, Mme. de Sévigné, who has been attacked by smallpox, was too much weakened to withstand the fever, and died on 17th April, 1696, without even the comfort of her daughter's presence at her bedside. Thus it was decreed that one of the most warm-hearted women of her century should pass away neglected and in solitude, out of reach of the many who had cherished her friendship in previous years.

IV. NINON DE LENCLOS

THE SALON OF GALLANTRY

"WOMEN all flock to visit Ninon de Lenclos, as formerly only men used to do," wrote Mme. de Coulanges to Mme. de Sévigné in 1695. These were significant words. Light o' love, bewitching, inconstant and unashamed, the remarkable woman to whom they referred achieved the greatest triumph of all in a triumphant career when she attracted round her in her old age those who had openly scorned her in the days of her greatest beauty and prosperity.

Half hidden in the mist of legendary history, for Mlle. de Lenclos made an excellent peg on which to hang a certain type of *gallant* anecdote affected by the *raconteur* of her day, Ninon's personality is as elusive as delightful. She was judged by people of two classes; those who regarded her from the pinnacle of their own virtue and perceived an abandoned woman, and those, influenced by her fascination, who were blinded to her faults. Only a sexless observer could be sufficiently impartial to strip off the contempt, scorn and aloofness of a woman's attitude and guard against the dangers of enchantment which would beset him as a man; and such an observer would realise that Ninon was gifted with a great power, rarely bestowed on women, of indulging freely in pleasures of the senses without

starving either her spiritual gifts or her intellectual powers. Ninon, in short, was Ninon apart, since no law fits her case. It is easy to be famous and to degenerate into notoriety. It is more difficult to be notorious and to achieve fame. But to gather fame off the same tree from which you have already plucked the fruits of notoriety is to perform a miracle. Ninon did this; and those who choose to deplore the fact that she was non-moral should be fair enough to praise her steadfastness and earnestness in overcoming the evil results of her negative attitude towards virtue. They were not overcome in a day. Three different periods marked the advance and they were distinguished by the title she bore in each. In the first she was "The Ninon," "The dangerous Ninon," or "Ninon the Courtesan"; in the second she was known as Ninon de Lenclos who was attractive, interesting, witty, but to be approached warily; in the third she had blossomed forth into the most respectable Mlle. de Lenclos, who was sought after, received with open arms into the best society, flattered, loved and consulted on matters of etiquette, regarded as a model and fêted and lionised as the spoilt darling of the hour. Moreover, a spoilt darling she remained until she reached the age of ninety, and her records cover the close of Louis XIII.'s reign, the Regency and almost the whole period during which Louis XIV. occupied the throne.

Born on 15th May, 1616, Ninon was the child of parents who diverged widely in taste and thought. The father, a gentleman of Touraine, was a man of ill-regulated habits of life who early commenced to instil in his young daughter's mind, both by his teaching and example, unconventionality of ideas and

liberty of action which verged on licence; poisonous seeds which her mother, in an agony of sincere and strenuous piety and prayer, was totally unable to eradicate. Vainly Mme. de Lenclos endeavoured to persuade Ninon to share her daily devotions. The girl could not be induced to leave her music, her dancing and the social pastimes to which she was freely bidden on account of her never-failing vivacity and wit. The father was a clever performer on the lute, and she had inherited his talent and became exceedingly proficient on this melodious instrument. She possessed, moreover, great social attractions. She had a knowledge of several languages, had read widely (Montaigne and Charron being her early favourites), and was gifted not only with tact, discernment, humour and kindliness, but with perfect grace and every physical charm. Thus her company was everywhere agreeable to the self-indulgent pleasure-seekers who lived in the Marais and whom she visited with her father, and her sweet nature opened like a scented blossom to every ray of the sunshine of friendship. Very little more than this is known of her life previously to the death of her mother in 1630, a sad event followed not long afterwards by the demise of her father.

At the youthful age of fifteen, Ninon was left sole mistress of her actions and her fortune, the latter being sufficient to enable her to lead the society life which had already opened to receive and welcome her. One of her most powerful patronesses was the famous Princesse de Guémenée, the handsomest woman at Court, of whom it was said that she was unable to brook rivalry of any kind in which her personal appearance was concerned. She was so

intent upon being considered the best-looking woman in the room that on one occasion when the Queen and Mme. de Chevreuse addressed a remark to her that she did not appear in good health, she left the assembly at once and returned home. It had never occurred to her to imagine that they had spoken purely from jealousy, her consuming fear being that some rival would outshine her beauty.

Ninon also had the *entrée* to the houses of Mme. de Maugiron, Mme. de Villequier, the Duchesse de Rohan, whose daughter married Chabot in spite of her mother's opposition, Mme. de Blerancourt, Mme. de Lude, Mme. de Piennes, Mme. de Grimault, the Maréchale de Bassompierre and others who, in spite of the fact that their own doings were not above reproach, soon found cause to object to Ninon's. Her name had already been coupled with those of several men in good position; Saint-Etienne, for instance, Le Chevalier de Rarai, Saint-Évremond, who remained her friend until his dying day, and even Richelieu, a doubtful piece of scandal for which Voltaire was in the main responsible. But when Coligny, later the Duc de Châtillon, became her lover, all discretion was cast aside, and society closed its doors to her, not to reopen them for nearly fifty years.

Ostracised by most of her own sex, Ninon sought the friendship of the beautiful but frail Marion Delorme, and retained that of the Comtesse de la Suze, who was self-opinionated enough to set aside the conventions and brave the world's displeasure.

Ninon and Marion Delorme gave brilliant receptions in turn, and courtiers, men of letters, epicureans and all worshippers of Beauty and the

Muses sought these entertainments with ever-increasing eagerness. Those who were always welcomed by their delightful hostesses were the Comte de Miossens, later Maréchal d'Albret, Charleval and D'Elbène —the three who did most to brand Ninon with the reputation of a headstrong and unruly beauty—the Duc d'Enghien, later Prince de Condé, the Marquis de Vardes, the Marquis de Créquy, the Comte de Palluan, afterwards Maréchal de Clérembaut, who wished to be thought witty like his father; the Commander de Souvré and the Comte de Grammont who, as Ninon wrote when he was an old man, "remains so youthful that I believe him to be as frivolous as he was in the days when he hated the sight of sick people, although he gave them back his affection as soon as they were restored to health". Neither Saint-Évremond nor Scarron must be forgotten, the latter, still young, wearing a cape to cover his physical deformity and indulging in his usual unquenchable gaiety. At Ninon's he met the Comtesse de Fiesque and the Comtesse de la Suze, his friends Sarrasin, Voiture and Benserade, as well as the pleasure-seeking Desbarreaux, the Marquis de Sévigné, the Prince de Marsillac afterwards Duc de la Rochefoucauld, Boisrobert and Desyvéteaux, the philosopher and lover of music whom Ninon surprised at his house in the disguise of a shepherd, wearing an absurd straw hat lined with pink taffetas and acting pastoral poems in the company of the childish and blushing La Dupuis, his girl companion.

Pleasure was openly the aim of all at Ninon's house; learning, discussion, criticism were vetoed, and gay conversation, sparkling wit, filled the quickly passing hours. At last the frivolity of her

receptions caused a scandal and her name became a by-word in society. As Scarron wrote of Ninon in his "Adieux au Marais":—

Tant est vrai que fille trop belle
N'engendre jamais que querelle.

The outcry reached the ears of the Queen Regent who desired the offender to retire into a convent. No mention was made of any particular house, however. Appreciating the fact that she was allowed to choose her own retreat and expressing her willingness to accede to the request of her royal mistress, Ninon sent a pert reply, naming the Monastery of the Grand Cordeliers. Fortunately when this answer reached Anne of Austria's ears, the Ducs de Candale and de Mortemart were present and joined Condé in pleading Ninon's cause, and assuring the angry Queen that the delinquent was but jesting; and the matter was allowed to drop. The affair might have injured her reputation still more irretrievably had not Condé just at this time showed her a particular mark of admiration and respect. Whilst driving in the Cours, the fashionable promenade where the fine world displayed its toilettes and its equipages, he stopped his carriage, stepped out and deliberately went to greet her before an astonished crowd. This act of courtesy silenced a rumour spread by her enemies that she was to be sent to the *Filles Repenties*. "That would have been very unjust," declared the Comte de Bautru, when he heard of it, "elle n'est ni fille, ni repentie!"

Whilst Mme. de Rambouillet made war against the corruption of morals and manners in one direction, Ninon revolted in another. The former sought to improve upon the existing condition of things by

introducing and fostering refinement, culture and learning. Ninon had almost the same end in view when she threw down the gauntlet to the coarse, unscrupulous, intriguing women of the day whose corrupt pleasures had degraded their intellect and who were ignominiously bound by the galling shackles of their own weakness and frivolity. She challenged them to do as she dared to do, to announce their independence and evolve a new philosophy of life. "I saw that women were put off with worthless and unreal privileges," she declared, "whilst every solid advantage was retained by the stronger sex. From that moment I determined on abandoning my own and assuming that of men." This very thought had been taught her in her youth by her father, and she had learnt to pray, "Mon Dieu, faites de moi un honnête homme, et n'en faites jamais une honnête femme". That this prayer was fulfilled would appear from the account of Saint-Évremond who said that she was one of "those extraordinary women who seemed to have borrowed the merits of men, and who perhaps show a kind of infidelity to their sex from thus passing out of their natural condition to the advantages of ours," as well as by La Bruyère, in his *Caractères* when he wrote, referring to her, "A woman who in addition to her beauty possesses the attractions of an honourable man, is the most delightful character in the world. She has the merits of both sexes."

Ninon did not attempt to conceal the fact that she preferred to choose her friends among members of her adopted sex, and the fortunate ones flocked to her Hôtel in the Rue de Tournelles and also to her country house at Picpus. Somebody facetiously

divided her companions into three classes, namely, "Les payants, les martyrs, et les favoris". Coulon belonged to the first section, and he made her an allowance for a period of eight or nine years. Aubijoux also helped her with money, and Perrachon offered her a house which, however, she refused. Among the "martyrs" were Brancas, Moreau, Regnier-Desmarais and Charleval. The latter visited her every day and wrote the following descriptive lines on her circle which was facetiously called "Les Oiseaux des Tournelles":—

Je ne sois plus oiseau des champs
Mais de ces oiseaux des Tournelles
Qui parlent d'amour en tout temps
Et qui plaignent les tourterelles
De ne se baiser qu'au printemps.

The Comte de Saint-Paul, the Marquis de Gersey, the Abbés Fraguier, Gédoyn, Tallemant and Châteauneuf were members of the "Oiseaux des Tournelles". The latter said of Ninon that her lovers had no greater rivals than her friends. Her answer to those who pressed her too forcibly was always "You must await my caprice," and Charleval was amongst those who died waiting. His reward, had he but known it, was contained in a letter which Ninon wrote to Saint-Évremond in March, 1693: "M. de Charleval has just died and I feel his loss so deeply that I hasten to seek comfort in your sympathy. I used to see him daily. He had retained all the charm of his younger days together with all the kindness and gentleness so desirable in a true friend. We often talked of you and of those who were of our set. His life and mine had lately run much in the same groove."

Once when Ninon was very ill at the age of twenty-two and her friends were deploring the fact that she was nearing death in the bloom of her youth, she suddenly rallied and wittily declared, "Ah, je ne laisse au monde que des mourants". A *mourant*, in the phraseology of the day, was a man overwhelmed by the passion of love. Among the number of her devoted admirers many of the favourites belonging to the third class have been omitted. Navailles was one of them, and his good looks attracted her attention so markedly when driving in the Cours, that Ninon forced the Maréchal de Grammont to introduce him to her. The story goes that he fell asleep when he should have entertained her, and that in order to punish him she stole his clothes, dressed in them and stood by his bedside, masquerading in the threatening attitude of a disappointed and dangerous rival. Another was the Marquis de Villars, nicknamed Orondate, afterwards ambassador to the Court of Spain, for whose sake Ninon travelled in 1698 by mail-post attired as a courier. To the Marquis de la Châtre she gave a worthless bond of fidelity when he was called to the wars, from which arose the expression "billet à la châtre," meaning a document not worth the paper it was written on. The Chevalier de Méré was the father of one of her sons and the Maréchal d'Estrées and Abbé Dessiat disputed the paternity of another son, who was later known as the Chevalier de la Boissière. Henri, Marquis de Sévigné, fell into the toils of the irresistible Ninon, having met her at the house of another admirer, M. de Vassé. De Sévigné was superseded by Rambouillet de la Sablière, to whom Ninon shamelessly

remarked, "I think I shall love you for three months, it is three centuries for me," but within that period she had made room in her affections for De Vassé.

If Mme. de Sévigné felt the defection of her husband deeply, she was even more concerned to find that her son had also become enslaved by his passion for this fickle beauty. The subject of his infatuation rings a somewhat distressful note in several of her letters early in 1671. "Your brother wears the charms of Ninon," she wrote to her daughter on 13th March, "I wish they may do him no harm. There are minds that are spoilt by such ties. This same Ninon corrupted the morals of his father. Let us commend him to God;" and again, on the 1st of April, "I have been extremely diverted with our hurly-burly head-dresses; some of them looked as if you could have blown them off their shoulders. Ninon said that La Choiseul was as like the flaunting posters of an inn as one drop of water to another; a most excellent simile! But that Ninon is a dangerous creature; if you only knew how she argues upon religion it would make you shudder. Her zeal to pervert the minds of young people is much the same as that of a certain gentleman of Saint-Germain that we saw once at Livry. She says your brother has all the simplicity of the dove, that he is just like his mother, but that Mme. de Grignan has all the fire of the family and has more sense than to be so docile." On the 8th of the month she added: "But a word or two concerning your brother. Ninon has dismissed him. She is weary of loving without being loved in return. Ninon told him that he was a *mere pompion fricasséed in snow*. See what it is to keep good company;

one learns such pretty expressions." By the 22nd he was "completely discarded by Ninon," but he foolishly put into her hands some love-letters he had received from La Champmeslé, the actress, and all his mother's persuasions were needed to induce him to insist on their return. By the end of the month the episode was closed. Although De Sévigné still saw Ninon every day, it was, said Mme. de Sévigné, "merely as a friend, and she said to five or six of his acquaintances who thought he was sole possessor, 'Gentlemen, you are wrong if you suspect any harm between us, I assure you we live together like brother and sister'". In taking Mme. de Sévigné's account of the affair, however, it is well to remember that Ninon did not usually offer explanations or apologies for whatever she chose to do.

Ninon's Hôtel was in the very heart of the Marais, then the gayest quarter in Paris, inhabited by the very wealthy, both among the noble and the financier class. Pedestrians were able to walk through this district without fear of being splashed from head to foot with mud by passing equipages or of being attacked and robbed as soon as darkness fell. Owing to the number of residential mansions situated in this neighbourhood a constant stream of respectable people paraded the streets, and the theatres which opened several times a week, added to the traffic a quota of vehicles, chairs and foot-passengers. Ninon's house was always filled with guests and her table was considered as attractive as her boudoir. Her garden extended as far as the Place Royale, and a fine shrubbery through which ran sequestered walks was favourable to the intercourse of lovers. Sometimes

music was performed among these trees, adding fresh charm and enchantment.

With regard to the popularity of Ninon's receptions in her later days, a great many writers have corroborated the statement that it was considered a great honour to be received into her circle. "Corbinelli is full of the illustrious gatherings that take place at Ninon's house," wrote Mme. de Sévigné to M. de Coulanges, and Saint-Simon was even more explicit on this point.

"She had among her friends," he declared, "a selection of the best members of the Court; so that it became the fashion to be received by her, and it was useful to be so, on account of the connections that were thus formed. There was never any gambling there, nor unseemly mirth, nor disputes, nor reference to politics or religion; on the other hand, intellect and wit prevailed, old and modern stories, gossip and tattle, but all of it good-natured and without a breath of scandal. All was delicate, light, measured; and she herself maintained the conversation by her wit and her sound knowledge of facts. The respect which, strange to say she had acquired, and the number and distinction of her friends and acquaintances, continued when her physical charms were waning, and when propriety and fashion compelled her to exert only intellectual attractions. She knew all the intrigues of the old and of the new Court, serious or frivolous; her conversation was charming. She was disinterested, faithful, secret, safe to the last degree, and, apart from indiscretions, she was virtuous and remarkably honest."

The Abbé Gédoyn also bore testimony to her

charm as a hostess and to the value from the social point of view of her receptions. "The house of Mademoiselle de Lenclos (the celebrated Ninon)," wrote the Abbé d'Olivet in the preface to Gédoyn's *Œuvres Diverses*, "was the meeting-place of all the polished and esteemed intellects of Court and city. Women of the highest virtue encouraged their sons, on their entry into the great world, to visit Ninon on account of the social advantages accruing to any one admitted into such amiable society, regarded as it was as the very centre of good company. Abbé Gédoyn had but to appear to be appreciated, and there he formed friendships which were the means of greatly advancing his reputation and his good fortune."

Perhaps the Marquis de la Fare was the most eulogistic of all writers when describing her *salon*. "I never saw her at her best," he wrote in his *Mémoires*, "but I can assure you that at the age of fifty and until she was seventy she had lovers who were most devoted, and the highest in the land were among her friends. Moreover, until she was eighty-seven years of age she was still sought after by the best society of the time. She died in full possession of her faculties, and even with the charms and attractions of her wit which was superior to that of any other woman I have known." Dangeau, too, historian and courtier, who visited Ninon's Hôtel frequently, made an entry in his journal at her death which reads, "Mlle. de Lenclos has died in Paris. Although she was very old she preserved so much wit and charm that the best company in Paris was to be found daily at her house."

Among the women who were to be met at Ninon's Hôtel in the later period of her entertainments were

Mme. de Sévigné and Mme. de Grignan, Mme. de Choisy, Mme. de Thianges, Mme. de Torp, Mme. de Cornuel, and Mme. de Coulanges. Ninon compared Mme. de la Fayette, also a frequent guest, to the richest fruit-growing district, and Mme. de la Sablière to a bed of lovely flowers delicious to the senses. This latter lady was "femme galante, femme pédante and femme dévote," but was more popular for her personal charms than for her knowledge of Horace and Virgil, mathematics and astronomy. She criticised Boileau's verses, and he retorted by writing a very thinly disguised description of her in the character of a *pédante*. She also made an enemy of La Grande Mademoiselle, who called her "petite bourgeoise" because she influenced Lauzun to leave her coterie. She was said to be in love with the Marquis de la Fare whom she met at Ninon's gatherings. Bayle credits her with being "un esprit extraordinaire," and Mme. de Sévigné said that she possessed in great degree "l'esprit de société".

One of the most important among Ninon's visitors of her own sex was Mme. la Duchesse de Bouillon, *née* Mancini, of whom Ninon wrote in a letter to Saint-Évremond in 1687, "she appears not a day older than eighteen; such charms are a sign of the Mazarin blood". Sometimes this autocratic lady invited Ninon, by her messenger, the Abbé de Chaulieu, to visit her at the Temple, and records of such occasions appear in the Abbé's letters to the Duchesse. "Mademoiselle de Lenclos will visit you at six o'clock in the evening," he wrote. "It was at that hour that Philemon and Baucis offered to the gods a repast as frugal as my own; our poverty, innocence and simplicity are traits that justify the comparison."

And again: "If possible we shall have Mademoiselle de Lenclos. If you could extend your contributions to include some liqueur, pray do so, for I have only burgundy and champagne and a little of that cognac which fed the fire of the vestals. I am always in terror lest it should not burn in the Temple which is the haunt of every virtue excepting chastity, that has never, never set foot there." Ninon was by no means partial to this kind of society and did not cultivate it. She preferred to drink nothing but water, and needed no stimulant to enhance her liveliness. It was always said of her at her little suppers that she was "ivre dès la soupe".

The Duchesse de Bouillon was aunt of the Duc de Vendôme and his brother the *Grand Prieur*. The latter attempted to obtain a familiar footing at the Hôtel in the Rue des Tournelles, and when it was refused him he revenged himself in verse: —

> Indigne de mes feux, indigne de mes larmes
> Je renonce sans peine à tes faibles appas
> Mon amour te prêtait des charmes
> Ingrate, que tu n'avais pas.

Ninon responded with a parody: —

> Insensible à tes feux, insensible à tes larmes
> Je te vois renoncer à mes faibles appas
> Mais si l'amour prêtre des charmes
> Pourquoi n'en empruntais-tu pas?

She was not usually discourteous, but if any man awakened dislike in her she promptly expressed her feelings. She was equally frank with Rémond who was called "le Grec," and said of him, "I became the dupe of his Greek learning and banished him because he looked upon philosophy and the world in general from the wrong point of view. He was

quite unworthy of my companionship. When God made man he repented of his deed. That is how I feel about Rémond."

La Maréchale de Créquy visited Ninon, the Duchesse de la Feuillade, and the Comtesse d'Olonne whose portrait was written by Saint-Évremond in very flattering terms. "After having well admired you," he said, "what I find the most extraordinary is that you have collected in yourself the several charms of different beauties. You are mistress of those graces that surprise, that please, that flatter and affect us. Your character, properly speaking, is not a particular character, 'tis that of all the Fair. . . . The fiery lover finds in you an inexhaustible subject for his raptures, tender souls find all that is proper to feed their tenderness and their languishings. Different tempers, various humours, contrary inclinations, all are subject to your empire." Another particular friend of Ninon's was the Marquise de Villette, who, as Marie-Claire Deschamps de Marsilly, had married in 1695 the Marquis de Villette, a man forty-three years older than herself. Mlle. de Marsilly had been educated at Saint-Cyr and her proposed husband was cousin to Mme. de Maintenon, who was therefore supposed to have taken part in arranging the marriage. Ninon esteemed Mme. de Villette so highly that she wrote to her: "You say that you realise my feelings for you, and know how different they are from those I bestow upon other women; and you please me still more by owning that this proof of my good taste has touched you. But this is your due, for you must know that you are as an inspiration to all who know you . . . you are very dear to me and I

NINON DE LENCLOS

FROM A MINIATURE IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM

deeply sympathise with everything that concerns you."

Two, at least, of the women who took an interest in Ninon were not her own country-women. Queen Christina of Sweden was one of these, and during her visit to Paris arranged a meeting with Mlle. de Lenclos, who was among the very few to be thus honoured. Nothing is recorded of the interview except that it gave rise to Ninon's famous *bon mot* when she described the *précieuses* as "les Jansénistes de l'amour," an expression which amused Queen Christina so thoroughly that for long afterwards she continued to refer to it. With Lady Sandwich, second daughter of the second Earl of Rochester, Ninon cultivated a much closer and more sustained intimacy. Lady Sandwich was said to have inherited much of her father's wit. Saint-Évremond wrote to Ninon in 1689: "My intimate friend Doctor Morelli is to accompany the Countess of Sandwich who is being sent to France for her health; her father, the late Earl of Rochester, was the wittiest man in England; the countess is cleverer still, moreover she is as generous as she is witty and her amiability surpasses both her generosity and her wit. These are but a part of her charms. But I can tell you far more on the subject of the doctor than on that of the patient," and he proceeded to request her to introduce Morelli to her "special and distinguished friends". Ten years later Ninon wrote to Saint-Évremond, "My acquaintance with Madame Sandwich was a source of great pleasure since I was so fortunate as to take her fancy; I should never have believed that at my advanced age I could possibly have proved agreeable to her, she

being so much younger. She certainly is wittier than any other woman in France, and has, moreover, far greater merit. She is leaving us, a regrettable matter for every one who knows her, for me most of all. Had you all been here we should have enjoyed some meals worthy of bygone days."

Saint-Évremond was Ninon's chief correspondent, as he was her most constant friend. Born in 1616 at Saint-Denis-le-Guast he was at first destined for the law, but made the army his profession and in 1637 obtained his command. He fought at Nordlingen as lieutenant of the Guards of the Duc d'Enghien. During the Fronde he warmly embraced the royal cause and was made Maréchal-de-Camp in 1652 with a pension of a thousand crowns. For an act of indiscretion he spent three months in the Bastille, and in 1661 an attempt was made to arrest him for writing an incriminating letter concerning Mazarin. He fled to Normandy, crossed the frontier and took refuge in Holland, and in 1662 settled in England. He repeatedly requested permission to return to France, and several of Ninon's friends, M. de Lionne, M. de Lauzun and the Comte de Grammont, did everything possible to obtain the King's pardon for him. When he was at length recalled in 1689 he felt unwilling to break away from the manner of living to which he had become absolutely reconciled. In 1703 he died and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Saint-Évremond who was an epicurean, had two or three boon companions, the Commander de Souvré, the Comte d'Olonne and the Marquis de Bois-Dauphin. M. de Lavardin chaffed him and his comrades on the delicacy of their taste in wines. "These

gentlemen," he said, "only know how to drink wine which comes from the Trois Côteaux d'Ai, d'Haut-Villiers and d'Avenay." From this jest there arose in 1654 a "society of gastronomy" named the Order of the Trois Côteaux, and it was still in existence when Saint-Évremond lived in England. In 1674 he wrote a letter to the Comte d'Olonne, shortly after the latter's banishment from Court and whilst he was staying in Orleans, embodying some of the principles of this Epicurean Association. "Be not too desirous of rarities," he commanded, "but be nice in your choice of what may be had with convenience. A good wholesome natural soup, which is neither too weak nor too strong, is to be preferred for common diet before all others, as well for the exquisiteness of its taste, as for the advantage of its use. Tender juicy mutton, good sucking veal, white and curious barn-door fowls, well-fed but not cramm'd; fat quail taken in the country; pheasant, partridge and rabbit, all which have an agreeable natural savour in their taste, are the true meats which may help to furnish your table all the seasons of the year. . . . Look upon all mixtures and kitchen compositions called *ragoûts* or kick-shaws to be little better than poison. If you eat but little of them, they will do you but little hurt; if you eat a great deal, it is impossible but their pepper, vinegar and onions must ruin your taste at last, and soon cause an alteration in your health," and so forth and so forth. Is it to be wondered at that at the last his thoughts turned to his favourite subject? When he was dying he was asked whether he wished for a reconciliation. "Yes, with my stomach," was his laconic reply.

One of his letters to Ninon contained a discourse on the "Morale d'Epicure," and in it he named her "la moderne Leontium". She had believed Sarrasin's *Reflexions sur la Doctrine d'Epicure* to be from Saint-Évremond's pen, and the latter felt called upon to undeceive her. He wrote of her:—

L'indulgente et sage nature
A forme l'âme de Ninon
De la volupté d'Epicure
Et de la vertu de Caton.

To the very end he expressed his undying affection. "The thought of you," he wrote, "brings many words to my pen; how shall I express them? Love is so closely connected with you; in giving and receiving it you have ever shown good reasoning powers. Were I to cease to love you, the end of love, where you are concerned, must necessarily imply the end of life." The correspondence between Ninon and Saint-Évremond forms a valuable addition to the information regarding the former which may be taken to be strictly authentic.

Bonrepos was another friend who was favoured with a number of letters from "Notre Dame des Amours," as Walpole called Ninon. Saint-Simon describes him as a very short, fat man with a ludicrous expression of countenance and a disagreeable accent. He was, however, not only an excellent conversationalist, but his letters, according to Racine who was his friend, were worthy of comparison with the epistles of Cicero. "I have never found his equal in the matter of correspondence," declared Racine; "he had the whole art of letter-writing; treating serious subjects with force and eloquence, whilst more trifling things called forth the most agreeable badin-

age." He acted as messenger from Ninon to her son, La Boissière, and no doubt earned her gratitude in this manner, for he was the recipient of one of her most pronounced declarations of unchanging friendship. "You will ever hold a place in my thoughts and my esteem," she wrote in 1690, "and I beg you to reciprocate this state of things. The merit that underlies a lasting friendship is not to be despised. I therefore take pride in my constancy—although I have not many opportunities of proving it." This last phrase surely discloses the woman Ninon as she really was, stripped of the exaggeration and misconception of fictional accounts. Another characteristic passage was written in the same year. She was annoyed with Bonrepos, who had been a constant member of her gatherings, for calling upon Mlle. de Scudéry and not upon herself. "After all, she, too lives in the Marais," she complained, "and not far from my Rue des Tournelles. Where the old folk of this neighbourhood are concerned, I consider that the precedence belongs to me. As to the younger ones, I leave to them the right to amuse my friends after they have left me." Ninon made a cutting remark about Mlle. de Scudéry whom she did not like, and who she said had the appearance of a "septante" (septuaginarian). Mlle. de Scudéry was certainly the butt of sharp-tongued ladies. Mme. de Cornuel declared it was evident that she "was destined by providence to blacken paper, since she sweated ink from every pore". In Ninon's case, at all events, the author of the *Grand Cyrus* returned good for evil, since she left a really flattering portrait of her in *Clélie* under the name of Clarice: "The amiable Clarice is without doubt one of the most

fascinating women in the world, and her wit and temperament have an individuality entirely their own ; but before attempting a description of these points, it is necessary to say something about her beauty. Clarice has a fine figure, is agreeably tall, and is capable of pleasing all the world by virtue of her natural grace. Her hair is of the most beautiful chestnut shade I have ever seen ; her face is rounded, her complexion fair, she has a sweet mouth, with lips of scarlet, a small dimple in her chin which suits her to perfection, black eyes which flash fire and fun, and her whole expression revealing intellect and wit. Clarice appears to have been gifted with more than her share of intelligence ; and is moreover versatile to a degree but rarely equalled. She can be cheerful and amusing, adapts herself to all sorts and conditions of men, and more especially to people of quality. She is never at a loss for something to say, expresses herself with ease, enjoys frequent and hearty laughter, or a trifling joke, and loves to chaff her friends.

" But beyond such aids to amusement, this charming woman does not lack the power of reflection, nor the more serious qualities of intelligent thinkers. Her nature is endowed with the desirable quality of sympathy, which she never refuses to those in trouble. She can detach herself from the entertainment of the moment when friendship demands it ; she is faithful and evidently worthy of confidence. Her soul is above petty quarrels ; she is generous and warm-hearted. In short, she has won the hearts of the noblest in the land ; men and women alike ; differing as they do from one another in mind, in condition, in interests, in intelligence and in temperament, all of whom agree in declaring Clarice most

charming, since, in addition to wit and kindness, she possesses untold qualities all deserving of the highest esteem."

No list of Ninon's friends would be complete without the name of De Villarceaux, who by some was said to be her last lover. Voltaire declared him to be the father of her son, the Chevalier de Villars, whose tragic death in the garden at Picpus, when he discovered his relationship to the woman he loved passionately, caused her never-ending remorse. For three peaceful years Ninon lived with De Villarceaux on his country estate. Later he was declared to be Madame Scarron's lover as he certainly was her devoted friend, and a frequent visitor at the "Hôtel de l'Impecuniosité". Ninon's relations with De Villarceaux gave rise to one of the best known stories about her. One day a large number of friends were being entertained at Mme. de Villarceaux' house, when she sent for her son, the young Marquis, in order that he might show off his acquirements in public. His tutor was asked to question him upon his studies. "Quem habuit successorum Belus Rex Assiriorum?" asked he of his pupil. "Ninum," replied the latter promptly. Madame de Villarceaux, without waiting to be told that the answer was the only possible one, declared angrily: "That is a nice way to educate my son, teaching him to discuss his father's follies," and no explanation succeeded in pacifying her.

The Abbé Têtu, who constantly met Ninon at the Scarron's and other houses besides her own, earned her contempt by endeavouring to show her the folly of her ways. "He thinks," she wrote, "that my conversion would do him honour and bring

him as a reward from the King nothing less than a nomination to an abbey; but if his fortune is to depend on my conversion, I fear he runs a great risk of dying without having received preferment." That she was not without her redeeming qualities was proved conclusively by another friend of hers, M. de Gourville, who, upon being sent hurriedly away from Paris divided his fortune into two parts, and for safety's sake deposited 10,000 crowns with a Grand-Pénitencier and 10,000 with Ninon. On his return he went to collect his possessions, and to his surprise and horror found that the priest had distributed his worldly wealth among the poor. "If that is what happens in the case of a saint, what chance have I with one who is far otherwise?" cried the distracted De Gourville. But when he called on Ninon she embraced him and gave him a hearty welcome, assuring him how greatly pleased she was that he had come at length to claim his own again, and that she had kept the sum of money intact for him.

The number of Ninon's friends increased even to the end. There was Abbé Dubois, a "sprightly little man"; Bernier whom Saint-Évremond called "the daintiest of philosophers," and who regarded Ninon as quite a superior being; the Prince de Guéménée, the Duc de Lauzun, M. de Tallard, the Duc de Vivonne, M. de la Loubère, formerly Secretary of the Legation in Switzerland; the Chevalier de Rivière, M. de Noirmoutier; "that blind and straightforward man," Marquis de Tréville, whose real name was Troisville, and his son Armand; their friend the Marquis de Lassay, Fraguier who remarked of Ninon's eyes that all her life's history was written in them, and Chaulieu, already mentioned,

who said that love had taken refuge in her wrinkled forehead. "Wrinkles," declared Ninon, "should be relegated to an unseen position, such as the one the gods of paganism had chosen in which to hide Achilles' weakness." She was particularly sensitive about any reference to old age which La Rochefoucauld had declared was woman's Inferno. Saint-Évremond consoled her with regard to this tactless remark: "His Hades," he wrote wittily, "was premeditated in order to provide him with a maxim".

Mignard the painter was also Ninon's friend, and he introduced his daughter, the future Comtesse de Feuquières, to her, whilst deploring the fact that she had a very unreliable memory. "Never mind that," replied Ninon promptly; "it is all the better, for she will not make quotations." Many of Ninon's sayings have become famous; especially "we should make provision of edibles, not of pleasures, the latter should be taken impromptu," and "beauty without grace is like a hook without a bait".

M. la Chapelle, who had long been one of her intimates, offended Ninon irrevocably by his insobriety, and when at length she was forced to dismiss him from her company, he revenged himself by declaring that for a whole month he would get intoxicated every night and would write verses which should put her to shame; nor did he fail to carry out this threat. To him she owed her acquaintance with Molière, and the latterfelt thoroughly at home in the gay and unstarched society of the Rue des Tournelles. He quickly discovered and greatly appreciated Ninon's intellectual gifts and her fund of common sense, and he paid her the compliment of reading the *Tartuffe* at one of her gatherings. It was also said

that he owed to her the inception of the character of the Doctor in *La Malade Imaginaire*, which suggested itself to him whilst supping with her, Mme. de la Sablière and Despréaux.

The reception at which the reading of the *Tartuffe* took place was a most important function and became famous in social circles. Her *salon* was crowded with guests as renowned as the Prince de Condé, the Duc d'Agnan, Racine, La Fontaine, Bachaumont, La Chapelle, the musician Lulli, and of course Molière himself. Mme. Scarron, now Mme. de Maintenon, was there and Mme. de Sévigné, as well as many of those who have been mentioned as her frequent guests. At the beginning of the evening Ninon sang a song, accompanying herself upon the lute, the music being composed by Lulli, and the words by Bachaumont. A second song followed with words by La Chapelle. After the reading of the *Tartuffe* there was dancing, the minuet forming the chief figure. It was at this reception that Ninon in a few well-chosen sentences brought about a reconciliation between Molière and Racine after the disagreement which had taken place between them owing to the latter having withdrawn his play *Alexandre* from the former's theatre.

One of her last visitors was one of the most important, not only because he became a great celebrity, but because he wrote a full account of the interview he had with her as well as much interesting matter relating to Ninon. This visitor was Voltaire, who was still a child, and he depicted her as showing "the hideous signs of old age". "But," he added, "she was in very deed an austere philosopher." Ninon, on her part, appeared to realise his

extraordinary talents, which, although still in the bud, would one day cause him to rank among the greatest in the world. Attracted by his precocity she left to him at her death a sum of 2,000 francs to be spent in the purchase of books.

"When I was about thirteen," wrote Voltaire, although at the time he was actually eleven, "the Abbé de Châteauneuf took me to Ninon's house one day. I had written some very poor verses which apparently were not bad considering my tender age; this lady had formerly been acquainted with my mother, who was herself a great friend of Châteauneuf. Anyhow he seemed to delight in introducing me to her." He described her *salon* as a "miniature replica of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, but the conversation was less affected and the philosophy rather sounder"; and in the same article on her, written in 1751, he said that her house "was frequently the scene of delightful musical parties; people flocked there to admire her talent on the lute, on the harpsichord, to say nothing of worshipping at the shrine of her beauty. The Dutch philosopher, by name Huyghens, who discovered in France a satellite of Saturn, also set himself the task of observing Mlle. Ninon de Lenclos. Her influence was such that she made the mathematician both gallant and poetical, and he it was who wrote the verses quoted by Bret. The cleverest men and the best society visited her; they all supped at her house, and as she was not rich, she allowed her friends to contribute their own foods."

Huyghens was introduced to her by Fontenelle and the verses referred to were sent to Ninon by this faithful messenger, his admiration having been

strongly awakened by her beautiful singing. The poem was written in French, of course a foreign tongue to the mathematician, who was not even given to versifying—therefore a double excuse exists for their quaintness :—

> She owns five instruments which have gained my love,
> The two first are her hands, the two next are her eyes,
> As for the last of all, the fifth . . .
> Well! a man must be prompt and gallant.

Huyghens is said to have appropriated one of the inventions of the Abbé d'Hauteville, who was librarian to the Duchesse de Bouillon. The device in question was a small steel spring intended to reduce the vibrations of a watch regulator. D'Hauteville was furious and issued a "factum contre M. H. Huyghens touchant les pendules de poche," but all to no avail. D'Hauteville consoled himself by turning his attention to applied mechanics. He was nicknamed the "petit bibliothécaire" on account of his small stature, and was the son of an Orleans baker. Mme. de Bouillon, struck by his intelligence, burdened herself with his education, and he subsequently took orders, became her librarian, and finally enlisted and followed his regiment to the seat of war. He travelled to England and Italy with his patroness. He frequently visited Ninon whilst in Paris and she wrote letters to him. Sometimes he acted as messenger between her and Saint-Évremond. The latter sent him presents of tea and Ninon gave him wine as a mark of consideration and gratitude. It was to the Abbé d'Hauteville that she wrote in 1688 : " M. de Saint-Évremond and I shall write the epitaphs of the rest of mankind ".

The end of Ninon's life was calm and tranquil and

no important events came to disturb it. "Some lovers, many friends, a somewhat sedentary life, reading, agreeable supper parties, and that completes the end of her story," wrote Voltaire. His father, Arouet, signed the certificate of her death which took place on the 17th of October, 1705, the second witness to the document being Hérauld de Gourville, the nephew of her old friend. Thus passed away a woman so extraordinary that many chose to write accounts of her days. "If this should go on," declared Voltaire, "there will be as many 'lives' of Ninon as of Louis XIV. I can only hope the works will be more edifying than the poor details I have been able to give. However that may be; join me in saying a 'De Profundis' for her."

V. MADAME DE MAINTENON

THE SALON OF SATIRE

AMONG the visitors who flocked in crowds to the Hôtel de Troyes, Rue d'Enfer, Paris, in 1650, was a very young woman, pensive, modest, and retiring. She was not a *habituée* at this place of rendezvous, but drifted there one afternoon by chance, under the chaperonage of an aunt, at a moment when the fun and frolic which never ceased in this gay company were at their height. The entry of the new-comers caused a temporary pause in the loud talk and laughter, for the girl, who had not passed her early teens, was strikingly attractive in appearance, fair of complexion, with the charm of delicacy, clustering bright brown hair, and large dark eyes like velvet flower-petals. She was painfully aware of the glances turned in her direction, for she thought her frock too short to be becoming, and in her self-consciousness she blushed ; then, ashamed of this sign of emotion, she could not prevent the tears from gathering in her eyes and rolling down her cheeks. The sight of her distress touched the heart of one of the ladies present, who came forward in a kindly manner and succeeded in putting an end to the girl's embarrassment by caressing her and taking her upon her knee. In this dramatic but unorthodox fashion Françoise D'Aubigné was introduced to the circle of which only two years later she was to become if not

the leading spirit, at least the presiding genius and the good fairy. Ninon de Lenclos who played the part of patroness in this little episode knew no more concerning the identity of her beautiful *protégée* than that she was the granddaughter of Théodore Agrippa D'Aubigné, that she had been born in a prison and had come into close contact with poverty and the gutter. Her career, thus inauspiciously commenced, attained to the greatest heights. At the age of sixteen Mlle. D'Aubigné married Paul Scarron, the crippled poet of forty-two, and established herself at the head of one of the most famous literary gatherings in Paris. Left once more in indigence, she became a dependent governess to the legitimated children of the King and lived in the strictest seclusion. Later she emerged as Madame de Maintenon, married Louis XIV. at a period when the glory of his reign was at its zenith, and took her place as the first lady in the land of France, an extraordinary triumph for any one of humble origin, and which proved her to be possessed of unusual qualities. She was, indeed, a woman of inimitable charm, of remarkable restraint. She was equally capable of delighting such contrasting personages as the burlesque poet Scarron and Louis XIV.; she befriended the Queen and was trusted by the favourite, Madame de Montespan. She was respected by all, the dissolute and the sedate; Madame de Sévigné was her friend, so was Ninon de Lenclos. Priests and great society ladies, the rich and the poor, the suffering and the fortunate, above all little children everywhere offered her their tribute of affection. Still she was not happy, never knew happiness of the best kind, and in her proudest moments of success she pointed to the Château

Trompette, and said to her friend D'Albret: "There is the place where I received my first education; but I assure you that I now know a prison still more severe, and that my bed is not better than my cradle".

Her father was imprisoned in the Château Trompette either for debt, for fraud or because he was accused of having had dealings with the English when Viceroy of Carolina. The reason was not definitely known, but he certainly returned from America to France at an injudicious moment. His wife exerted herself to obtain his release, with the result that he was removed to the Conciergerie of Niort, a small town situated on the Sévres. Here on the 27th of November, 1635, their daughter Françoise was born amidst disgrace, disease and poverty. She was temporarily placed in the charge of her aunt, Madame de Villette, but in 1639 D'Aubigné was set free and again determined to seek his fortune in America. His wife and two children accompanied him. On the voyage out Françoise was attacked by a serious illness and given up for dead. A sailor stood ready to throw the corpse into the sea, but the mother, snatching it for a last embrace, found that life was not extinct. The incident was told by Madame de Maintenon in after years to the Bishop of Metz, who replied, "Madame, no one returns from such a distance for a little matter". She received the remark with an air of deprecation, for the keynote of her existence was an overweening desire to rise without the appearance of wishing to do so; and she was not yet at the height of her ambitions, not yet on that pinnacle of "astonishing fortune" which in all good

faith she declared to the Demoiselles of Saint-Cyr was "not her work". It was characteristic of the woman that she added, "I am where you see me without having desired it, or hoped for it, or foreseen it".

D'Aubigné lost his all at the gaming-table, died and left his wife and children destitute. The survivors returned to France, and Françoise at the age of ten was once more placed under the charge of Madame de Villette. "I very much fear," wrote her mother in 1646, to the aunt who had befriended her, "that this poor little *galeuse* may give you a good deal of trouble. God give her the grace to be able to requite you for it." Before long the question of the child's religion caused dissension, and for the purpose of instruction in the true faith she was removed from Madame de Villette's care and placed in the less lenient guardianship of Madame de Neuillant. The latter soon discovered that Françoise was very obstinate, would some day be very witty, had no desire to become Roman Catholic, and would never devote herself entirely to the Church. Her precocious genius made itself felt at this time, and showed chiefly in her power to rule, although her subjects were the humblest. She was queen of the farmyard, and even the cattle and horses knew and obeyed her. More especially she kept guard over the turkeys. "I ruled in the poultry-yard," she declared, "and there my reign commenced." In the meantime her intellectual education was not neglected. She was already familiar with Plutarch's Lives and had been known to learn by heart five pages of Pibrac's quatrains before eating her luncheon which was carried in a

basket over her arm. Unfortunately this rustic life was not of long duration, owing to an interruption which occurred in the shape of a declaration of love from a peasant lad and her consequent removal to the Convent of the Ursuline nuns at Niort. She still refused to abjure Protestantism and was presently placed in the Convent of the Ursulines in the Rue St. Jacques at Paris, where her religious tendencies became more orthodox. Her gift of pleasing others grew more and more pronounced; she had charm, she had *verve*, she began to use her power of attracting and subduing. "I was the best little creature that you can imagine," she herself wrote of this period, "so much so that everybody loved me. . . . When I was a little larger, I lived in the convents; you know how much I was loved by my mistresses and my companions. I thought of nothing but obliging them, and making myself their servant from morning to night." No expression could have explained more pithily her method of setting to work to win the confidence of those about her. It was her *métier* to constitute herself the servant of others and to end by becoming their mistress.

While she was still at the Convent she paid the memorable visit to Scarron already referred to. It would be difficult to imagine a contrast between any two people more marked than that between the *cul-de-jatte*, his days of activity already well behind him, and the young girl, her eyes just opened to a world beyond the convent walls, palpitating with life. In spite of the fixed gulf between them, perhaps because of it, the friendship between these two rapidly developed. Françoise was attracted by Paul Scarron, poet of the harlequinade, Abbé, not because he had

taken orders, but by virtue of possessing the canonry at Le Mans, who was sought by all, in the first place because he was regarded as a curiosity, subsequently because he was the most diverting of hosts. He was hideous, impossible, an arch-satirist, full of wit, of infirmities, of inexhaustible gaiety, lacking in physical vitality what he possessed in intellectual fire. He had respect for nothing, burlesqued everything, exposed the most sacred thought to ridicule, this poet, whose head hung upon his breast, whose limbs were horribly distorted, who had "his arms shortened as well as his legs, and his fingers as much as his arms". He called himself an abridgment of human misery, a grotesque copy in flesh of the letter Z, but he knew how to gather round him all the wit of social France, men and women of fashion, men and women of letters, men of the sword and of the long robe, players and painters, priests and grandees, roués and parasites. The street was choked with the carriages of those who flocked to his apartments, "as at another time," he said, "they would flock to see the elephant". From his earliest days he had been known as a writer of amusing verses, and he also composed madrigals, epigrams and letters by the score. It was his custom to sign himself "Le malade de la Reine," for he was under the protection of Anne of Austria, the Queen-Mother, who granted him a pension, which, however, was not long continued. Fouquet also supplied him with means, and the remainder of his precarious income was drawn from Le Mans, and his publisher Quinet, a source of revenue he facetiously styled his "Marquisate de Quinet". Upon these slender resources he entertained his friends, giving them sarcasms and *bon*

mots when he could not afford more substantial fare, and plying them with flippancies on politics, religion, literature, manners or sentiments, none of which subjects were free from the scurrilous tongues of the guests whom he assembled round him.

Into this hurly-burly with its atmosphere of the great world, of gallantry, of wine-bibbing, of atheism and revolutionism came Françoise D'Aubigné direct from a convent, possessed of a quiet dignity, of modesty, of discretion, her eyes peeping from beneath half-closed lids to take stock in quiet surprise of unfamiliar men and things; set fast in the habit of a severe decorum, eager for life, yet afraid of its devious paths, with a predominant passion for glory, only tempered by a dread of losing prestige, with an ambition to be adored by the whole world and above all to win its good opinion, and the confession on her lips that the admiration of a porter flattered her vanity as much as the homage of a king. Here was a dangerous temperament to be brought into sudden contact with a hundred conflicting ideas and emotions. For a time it seemed doubtful whether she would be carried by the stream or whether her weight would be sufficient to divert its course. Slowly but surely her presence made itself felt, and she escaped the whirlpool which had threatened to destroy her; deliberately and calmly she devoted her talents and her energies to the task of moulding her surroundings, and succeeded in obtaining something of a free hand in the guidance of affairs. She was not merely an appendage to Scarron's circle; rather she formed from the rough materials of which it was composed a genuine *salon* around them both.

Undoubtedly her sound common-sense saved her

from pitfalls, and of this quality Scarron had speedily obtained an inkling. "I ever suspected," he wrote after her first visit, "that the little girl who came into my chamber six months ago in a gown too short, and fell a-crying, I know not for what, had as much good sense as her looks seemed to discover . . . and I cannot well conceive the reason why you have taken the same care to conceal your wit, as others do to display theirs." A few months later he addressed love-letters to her, and when she was left practically destitute he gave her the choice of entering a convent as a nun, himself offering to pay the sum necessary for her admission, or of marriage on "a very narrow fortune and with a very ugly person". Françoise preferred the latter alternative, and a term of probation was decided on, which, however, was materially curtailed. The marriage contract being drawn, Scarron summed up his portion as "an estate of four louisdors, two large eyes, very saucy and dangerous, a very fine figure, a pair of beautiful hands, and a great deal of wit". His gift to her was "Immortality"; for, said he, "the names of the wives of kings die with them, but that of the wife of Scarron will live for ever". In this he was over-sanguine, for his writings are out of fashion to-day and his name, as an author, bears an empty, if fascinating sound. And his wife, who after all became the wife of a king, is known best as Mme. de Maintenon, the name she bore in the interval between the marriages, a fact which counts as one more tribute to the power of her extraordinary personality.

"What will Scarron do with Mademoiselle D'Aubigné?" said the Queen-Mother, when told of the marriage; "she will be the most useless piece

of furniture in his house." Truly, the ill-assorted match promised nothing but regrets and cares, but the result was contrary to every expectation. Scarron was a confirmed invalid, his wife read to him, soothed and consoled him, and built up for him the *salon* on which much of his fame has rested. "The marriage of Monsieur Scarron," said Sorbière, "will not be considered as the least shining circumstance in his life. The young beauty whom he chose . . . will always be the ornament of his story." The marriage was fortunate for both, in spite of the fact that the wedding-gown was borrowed, and that Scarron was *un époux platonique*. As for Françoise, she owed to this period many of her mental perfections and the opportunities of developing her undoubted abilities. She spent her days in strenuous duties, intellectual pleasures, and the study of Spanish, Italian and Latin, and at the same time gained ease and elegance in writing. Her presence doubled the pleasure of a visit to her husband's house, where, notwithstanding her modesty and diffidence, she shone with an involuntary radiance, purifying the atmosphere and proving to the company that restraint is not incompatible with gaiety. She could be gay among the gayest herself, and fearlessly uttered her own opinions on religion, philosophy, art and even politics. The situation was sometimes difficult and bizarre, for she found herself at the age of sixteen in a forcing-house of free speech and lax morals and was subjected to the influence of such men as Villarceaux, the most elegant of courtiers, who had the reputation of being a *friand des pots et trousseur de cotes*, the Chevalier de Méré, the Duc de Chevreuse, and the Maréchal d'Albret who was "si leger en

toutes ses amours, qu'il change encore, et changera toujours," and who ended his futile endeavours to win Françoise for himself by sacrificing every other affair to her code of honour, and becoming convinced that the friendship of a virtuous woman was rather to be desired than the love of one more frail.

Never for a moment did she lose her dignity, and her motto was henceforward, "There is nothing more clever than irreproachable conduct". The husband's boast, "I shall not make her commit any follies, but I shall teach her a good many," came to nought, for in this respect she was unteachable; his shaft, when she ventured to remonstrate with him on the freedom of his speech, "I would have you be as little moved at such discourse as a Lacedemonian Lady; I must train you to *war*," equally missed its mark. By some she has been regarded as a hussy and a humbug, by others as a prude and a saint, but such expressions are inadequate to describe the woman's complex character. She had numerous admirers, aspirants for her favours, "la belle Indienne," as she was called, but she handled them with a scornful amiability, an acumen and diplomacy beyond her years, and pursued the even tenor of her way, rejoicing in the security of her virtue and the growth of her reputation, the strength and nature of which may be gathered from a remark made by a noble at Court, who said of her: "If it were a question of taking liberties either with the Queen or with Madame Scarron, I would not deliberate, I would sooner take them with the Queen".

She invariably knew what part to play in every scene in which her fortune placed her, and she played it with a heartiness which added to its importance.

In Scarron's assemblies she chose the *rôle* of indulgent mentor, she countenanced and abetted the proceedings up to a certain point, beyond which she refused to step; in short, sure of her own powers of attraction and persuasion, she succeeded in "managing" the most distinguished people of the Court and of the city who made it the fashion to visit her *salon.* Various opinions have been expressed from time to time regarding the social standing of these gatherings, which in the eyes of some were regarded as the most brilliant in Paris, in the eyes of others as a heterogeneous meeting of oddities, wits and satirists. Rœderer proclaimed Mme. Scarron to be the true successor of Mme. de Rambouillet, Sainte-Beuve, on the other hand, refused to allow that she represented the social current of the day at its best. Saint-Simon, prejudiced as he was, and full of personal animus against the woman whom he called "the begging widow of a crippled poet," admitted that everybody who was anybody frequented the Scarrons' apartments. The truth was undoubtedly somewhere between the extremes. Whilst the most celebrated personages were to be found at the poet's table, so were many not usually seen in houses of more aristocratic origin. There was greater breadth, and "hail-fellow-well-met" Bohemianism here than in the more exclusive circles of the period, and whatever may have been wanting in *haut ton* was amply counterbalanced by the superior quality of the intellectual entertainment.

Scarron removed from the Hôtel de Troyes in the Rue des Douze-Portes into the Rue Neuve Saint-Louis, where his apartments received the facetious but grim title of the "Hôtel de l'Impecuniosité". A dark and narrow entrance opened upon a court formed by

stables, offices and outhouses, and led by way of a flight of stairs to the poet's home. The reception-room had but few natural advantages to recommend it. The walls were hung with English tapestries, twelve straight and forbidding chairs, upholstered in yellow, stood round a huge six-legged table, with an ebony cabinet on one side and a vague lounge somewhere in the background. The painting of the "Ravissement de St. Paul," executed for Scarron by his artist friend Nicolas Poussin in 1650, was accorded the place of honour and was flanked by a couple of bookcases containing historical works, volumes in Latin, Greek and Spanish, and modern Italian authors. There was one French Bible bound in black calf; Madame was nothing if not devout.

When occupied the room took on a very different appearance, and its lack of natural grace was more than atoned for by the flow and sparkle of wit and merriment, the unceasing laughter and the accompanying clink of glasses to which it was then devoted. Everything in it seemed animated, brilliant, alive. When Scarron became weary of the noise and excitement, he withdrew to the adjoining room, the walls of which were decorated with similar tapestry, and the bed hung with the now famous yellow damask, brought from the Hôtel de Troyes. On such occasions Madame entertained the guests without assistance, and did it so well that even her serving-man appreciated her wit at its true value, and begged one evening that she would tell another story because no roast was prepared. Sometimes it was she who escaped, leaving her husband surrounded by visitors who were uncongenial to him, and Scarron demurred at this for he never suffered fools gladly. Again there

were days when the raillery and *bon mots* fell like hailstones from heaven, and Mme. Scarron, feeling herself outraged by unbridled tongues, left the house, "prend son manchon et va voir quelque amie," as Scarron quaintly put it to his ugly friend Pellisson. He was always *triste* when this happened, and undoubtedly it was a factor in the cleansing of the conversation. Days were plentiful, however, when the objectionable muff was not required, when Madame remained the centre of a group of epicureans, sceptics, libertines and atheists, and walked among them, demure and nun-like, in her simple gown of grey serge. She extolled her moderation in dress many years later at Saint-Cyr, and informed the *demoiselles* that she had persisted in dressing in simple serge in the midst of the highest society and at a period when no one else wore it. Curiously enough records are extant of garments belonging to her which were much better suited to adorn her particular style of beauty than plain serge. There was, for instance, a skirt of flesh-coloured taffeta, one of musk-coloured silk delaine, and a third, doubtless worn whilst entertaining her guests, striped white and red, which was admirably set-off by a black velvet bodice or one of flowered-satin trimmed with fur. Sometimes, no doubt, she preferred her simple serge, but adorned it with collars of expensive lace, a luxury calculated to affect her husband's sparsely filled purse. No one could imagine of Françoise Scarron that she did not prefer to appear at her best.

Scarron loved ease and comfort and allowed his friends to provide it for him. He was a parasite in a century peopled with parasites and demanded presents and pensions in exchange for entertainment.

Alexandre d'Elbène helped him to settle in the Hôtel rue Neuve de Saint-Louis, and was almost always to be found there at meal-times. Intelligent, modest and cultured, d'Elbène gave much of his time to the fair sex and was never averse to drink in the honour of beauty. The Comte de Fiesque, on the other hand, was versatile, ardent, bucolic and imaginative, a meddler in politics, a dabbler in all the arts, which he served with an equal devotion but never mastered. His nature was alternatively serene and tumultuous, he sought fame and at the same moment desired peace; he craved to become a man of action, and frittered away his time in other *salons* besides that of Scarron. The Marquis de la Sablière was always welcomed, because his chief motive in life was pleasure, and being a financier as well as a singer of madrigals, he knew exactly how to handle sacks of gold, volumes of letters or the fair visitors who frequented his *ruelle*. His philosophy appears in his own verse:—

> Et si l'on veut me posséder
> Il faut des charmes pour me prendre
> Et des faveurs pour me garder,

and goes to prove that he was possessed of the ease and grace generally designated as feminine, whilst it was always held to be a fact that his wife, who was also a friend of the Scarrons, enjoyed the tastes and occupations of a man.

The gastronomic entertainment at the "Hôtel de l'Impecuniosité" may be classified as threefold; it was rarely supplied by the host, it was occasionally the outcome of a present; it was more frequently organised by the co-operation of the guests themselves,

the kickshaws and the condiments being usually in the house. His friends, knowing the poet's weakness in this direction, were not behindhand in furnishing *harnois de gueule ;* the Duc de Sully and the Duc d'Elbeuf specialising in *pâtés*, whilst D'Albret gave cheese. In return, he received permission to carry on a voluminous correspondence with Françoise under the eye of her husband, and their names were coupled to her disadvantage. In company with the Maréchal de Turenne, and Villequier, Maréchal d'Aumont, D'Albret infused a martial air into the proceedings. Turenne was at this time a veteran of great standing in his profession, with a stern face, bushy eye-brows, deep-set eyes and disordered locks ; having withdrawn from the battlefield he rejoiced in frequenting the home of letters. D'Aumont was a connection of the family and privileged to enter Madame's room unannounced. Another veteran was the Commander de Souvré, whom Louis XIV. made Ambassador of the Order of Malta ; having left the army behind him like Turenne, he digested wines and literature at one mouthful, devoted himself to a study of the gastronomic arts and was found very useful at the Scarrons' table in appreciating the *bonnes bouches*, such as *sarcelles lardées* always associated with l'Abbé d'Espagny (himself no mean connoisseur of epicurean dainties), or the dessert bonbons showered upon the company by the Comte de Selle, who also generously moistened the repast with flagons of muscat.

Scarron had many friends among the Abbés who at this period indulged a taste for gallantry, for feasting, for drinking and for letters. Louis Hector de Gondrin, Archbishop of Sens, made himself felt as a

personality in all departments, and placed upon the shoulders of others the burden of the sins he committed through vanity and lightheartedness. L'Abbé Têtu, whose reputation was none of the best, was the cause of aspersions being cast upon that of Mme. Scarron, whom he met frequently at the Hôtel d'Albret. Of him Louis XIV. said, "Il n'est pas assez homme de bien pour conduire les autres". He was dissipated, ambitious, regarded as dangerous and a fanatic, although women were known to look upon him as an oracle, for in response to the contemporary pun on his name, "Têtu, tais-toi," he became silent and a good listener, a distinction shared with him by the Abbé de Franquetot, who received all confidences quietly, and greatly diverged from by Boisrobert, who was known chiefly as "un grand dupeur d'oreilles". The latter Abbé revelled in scandals, quarrels and debauches, was steeped in atheism, in vice, and, subtle as a fox, had possessed himself of a stolen fortune. Still the *cul-de-jatte* tolerated him, probably because he could talk, and a niche was reserved for him among the poets, the painters and the humorists. Among the latter several vied for championship; Vivonne, by virtue of his ancestry, for he was the witty descendant of wits; Mata, whose repartee passed from mouth to mouth; Philibert de Grammont, distinguished, courageous but marred by frivolity, whose sallies were saved for the benefit of posterity; Méré, the elegant, an adept in sparkling chat, in tender whispers, who combined the sting of an epigram with the sweetness of a madrigal. Ninon de Lenclos drove him to flirt with Aristotle by chasing him from her boudoir, for he was sometimes a lover, sometimes a pedant,

always a *frôleur*, and chameleon-like changed his vagaries and his attitude to suit his company.

No one knew better than Scarron how to celebrate occasions, no one had more grace with the goblet in his hand, or could inspire a greater cordiality throughout an assembled company. On one side he placed the *bouffon* Sarrasin whom laughter followed everywhere, on the other Mignard the painter, just back from Italy, whose portrait of Mme. de Maintenon, executed for Saint-Cyr, now hangs in the Louvre; beyond were friends of the Fronde and others, Beys, Colletet, Loret, Segrais, the eternal teller of tales and witty author of *Segraisiana*, who refused the tutorship of the Duc du Maine offered him later by Mme. de Maintenon; Hénault, Rosteau, La Mesnardière, Grénault, Sorbière, the last three representing the medical faculty; Charleval, the poet, Coligny and Ménage, the Latinist who lied "like the charlatans of Pont-Neuf," and conversed in Italian and Spanish with Madeleine de Scudéry, "la Grande Sappho," *précieuse* and portrayist.

Among the women attracted by the persiflage of their host were the Comtesse de Fiesque, "steeped in extravagance like cherries in brandy," the Comtesse de Brienne-Loménie, wife of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mme. de la Bazinière, La Belle Gueuse; Mme. de la Suze, who "changed her religion in order that she might not see her husband in this world or the next," her friend Mme. de Revel, and two whose names are seen frequently in proximity, but who had little enough in common, Mme. de Sévigné and Ninon de Lenclos, the latter not at all disconcerted by the presence of former lovers. Why should she be? Gallantry formed the under-

current of such an assembly and helped to infuse the incongruous elements swept into it by diverse personalities. Speech and laughter, declamation and song, the clink of glasses, portrait-drawing and versifying—Scarron's verses exhaled fumes of the roast and the bouquet of the wine—did the rest. Sometimes the poet imposed a temporary silence upon the assembled guests, and sending for his latest tribute to the Muse, declaimed scintillating poetry or imaginative prose. Opinions on the performance were expressed by everybody, and some, in turn, produced their own literary efforts, which did not escape criticism, all present being nearly deafened by sudden outbursts of applause and choked by the blue fog of thickening tobacco smoke.

And in this atmosphere Mme. Scarron in her youth, her beauty, her fresh young enthusiasm, with her anxiety to please, her eagerness to live and to rise, stood out a strange and solitary figure on an ever-changing, many-coloured background, which displayed her abilities to advantage, whilst it ran incongruously counter to her prejudices. Under the name of Lyrianne she was portrayed at this time by Mlle. Scudéry :—

"She was very tall, but her stature such as not to impress awe, but to give dignity to her mien, her complexion was fair, her hair of a bright chestnut colour, the form of her face was excessively agreeable and her mouth finely shaped ; her air was noble yet tender, modest yet gay, and to make her beauty more stirring and perfect, she had the finest eyes in the world ; they were large and black, shining, soft, passionate, full of fire and expression, there was a nameless charm in their looks, a soft languor some-

times appeared in them, with all its insinuating charms, and sometimes the sprightliness of her wit and the gaiety of her temper pointed their glance, and gave them new lustre; her mind was well suited to her person, elevated, yet full of softness, her wit lively, just, insinuating; she spoke correctly, but unaffectedly and gracefully; she knew the world and many things which she did not appear to know, and with a thousand inevitable charms she seemed to be ignorant that she was beautiful; thus adorned with every grace of virtue, wit and beauty, it may be justly said, that she merited all the admiration she inspired."

According to Saint-Simon she retained to the end evidences of the "dainty-phrase" period, of the vogue of the *ruelle*, but this suggestion does not emphasise the fact that correctness was more than a pose in her, it was a passion and grew to be a vice. It is less surprising that she remained virtuous in her *salon* days than that she was reported to be otherwise, even in that hot-bed of gossip. Mlle. Scudéry said of her that "the air she breathes seems to inspire chastity," and Ninon de Lenclos declared that she was "trop gauche pour l'amour". The latter studied her fairly on these very lines and gave a matured opinion to the world. "In her youth," she said, "Mme. de Maintenon was virtuous through want of spirit; I wished to cure her of it, but *she feared God too much.*"

The truth of the whole matter lay in the fact that Mme. Scarron intuitively realised that direction in which her influence was strongest, and was too busy aspiring to the glory of improving others to lose the best weapon she possessed, the force of example.

Moreover, she chose to be different from those about her, and to attract notice through this very difference. The inference is obvious; she made a fetish of propriety, and in this spirit was induced to fast on beans and herrings at a side-table throughout Lent, whilst the others feasted, and to show disapproval by withdrawing from any scene which might cause aspersions to be cast upon her decorum. No woman was ever more conscious than she of appearances, of suitability, of the right attitude, of a manner which should charm, stimulate virtue, ensure approbation and avoid offence. Had she been more natural, more human, she would have been irresistible.

In October, 1660, when he had been married to Françoise for eight years, Scarron died, leaving her in indigence, his last regret being that he had no property to give to a wife with whom "he had every imaginable reason to be satisfied". No doubt this made it necessary for Mme. Scarron to retire into the background; at all events with the poet's death a strange thing happened, the *salon* likewise ceased to exist and his wife made no efforts to retain the friends in whose circle she had figured as a twin-star. Either she believed that a higher sphere of life was awaiting her and voluntarily chose the first opportunity of transplantation, or she knew herself to have been grafted on an unsuitable parent-tree and could not derive nourishment from the same soil. The fact that she refused at least one offer of marriage from a noble suitor in Scarron's set points to some such attitude of mind, and the care with which she selected her new friends the moment a modest pension of 2,000 livres was granted her by Anne of Austria seems a confirmation of it. Mme. de

Sévigné was then preferred to Ninon de Lenclos, D'Albret to Villarceaux, and Mme. de Coulanges, Mme. de la Fayette, Mme. de Richelieu were among those who received her special favours. This period of her life was happy and tranquil but did not last long, for in 1666, by the death of the Queen-Mother, she was again left pensionless.

Shortly afterwards she obtained the introduction to Mme. de Montespan which was full of significance for her. The pension was renewed and, rejoicing at this termination of her difficulties, the young widow established herself modestly in a small apartment in the Rue des Tournelles, where she occupied herself with serious books and works of charity, to all intents and purposes forgetting the gay life she had unquestionably enjoyed. Mme. de Montespan was now the King's mistress and Mme. Scarron became the governess of their children. She settled down at Vauregard some miles from Versailles, and devoted herself absolutely to the care of the Duc du Maine, the Comte de Vexin and Mlle. de Tours, living in such seclusion that Mme. de Coulanges wrote to Mme. de Sévigné: "As for Mme. Scarron, her life is an astonishing kind of thing. Without exception not a soul has intercourse with her." Perhaps she had the greater opportunity on this account for weaving visions of better things with ambition for the warp and admiration for the woof. She now came into touch with the King himself, and her bearing towards him caused her to be accused of Machiavellian calculations and subtle hypocrisies. At first he showed a distinct distaste for her presence. "The King did not like me," she confessed, "and long held me in aversion; he was afraid of me as

MADAME DE MAINTENON

FROM A MINIATURE IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM

MADAME DE MONTESPAN

FROM A MINIATURE BY PETITOT IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM

a wit." To Mme. de Montespan, indeed, he spoke of her at first under the designation of "your great wit". He was displeased when she became too friendly with the favourite, and when settled at Versailles with a pension that was increased to 6,000 livres, she spent the evenings in her society, counselling her what to do and gossiping about the events of the day, embroiling herself in quarrels and at the same time becoming more and more indispensable. These very differences between herself and Mme. de Montespan brought her more closely into association with Louis XIV., who was usually called in to arbitrate between them. Her attitude was invariably irreproachable, she refrained from abuse, she apologised for having to act in self-defence. Louis, who is said to have taken "a delighted admiration in great battles, in acts of heroism and courage, in war-like preparation, in the skilfully combined operations of a siege, in the terrible affrays of battle," like many another strong man and warrior, was nonplussed when brought face to face with domestic hostilities. "I had more trouble to make peace between them," he said, "than to re-establish it in Turkey." To avoid further unpleasantness and because he regarded Mme. Scarron as most reasonable in her demands, he gave her the estate of Maintenon and she was styled Marquise. Under the name of Scarron—in itself a jest—she might have found it difficult to tread in the high places to which she was threading her way; even as Mme. de Maintenon the foothold was at times rough and treacherous. In 1677 Mme. de Montespan gave her broad hints that there was no further occasion for her services, but she refused to take them. "They have wanted

to get rid of me," she wrote to her brother on 12th May, "but they have not succeeded; you know I am not easily shaken off."

Slowly but surely the King's interest in her was strengthened, slowly but surely she became indispensable to him too. She framed the wording of a letter purporting to come from Mme. de Montespan in answer to his question, "May a prince be loved for his own sake?" and the true identity of the writer being disclosed the recipient declared he would communicate direct with her. The Duc du Maine, of whom Louis was very fond, formed a strong bond between them, and hearing the child call his governess "Wisdom itself," he permitted him to offer her "a hundred thousand livres for sugar plums". When Mme. de Montespan lost one of her children he discovered that the governess had a tender heart hidden beneath her unemotional exterior, and he declared, "She knows how to love, it would be a pleasure to be loved by her".

Such were the straws carried by the gentle breeze which were the precursors of a hurricane strong enough to sweep away a city. She endeavoured to convert Louis to her own way of thinking, to make him renounce his passion for Mme. de Montespan and return to the Queen. Nothing could move her to abandon this self-imposed task, not even the knowledge of how much she owed to the favourite. "'Tis religion, 'tis my zeal for your glory that urges me to speak," was her cry, "'tis a desire to behold in you the best Christian as the world already sees in your person the greatest King, 'tis the vexation of spending my life with persons who daily offend God." This argument, presented by a woman whose soul

seemed hovering on her lips, who had never appeared more eloquent, more amiable, more intense, had a marked effect upon Louis; impressionable as he was in spite of his majesty and influenced more easily by a word, a kiss, a smile from one he loved than by all the riches, pomp and power of which he so well understood the fascination and the sway. No wonder that she was called designing, that she was looked upon as having betrayed the woman to whom she owed so much, and yet it is impossible not to credit her with the belief that she was doing right, rather than to assert that she acted from sheer self-seeking.

She was flattered now and sought after, the King delighted in her conversation and demanded her presence at his pleasure parties; the great were among those who paid her homage, and she became known facetiously as Mme. de *Maintenant*. In 1680 Mme. de Sévigné paid a tribute to the change in her position. "People no longer approach her," she wrote, "without fear and respect, and the ministers pay court to her like the rest. . . . She is introducing the King to an entirely new region; I mean the commerce of friendship and conversation, without chicanery and without constraint. He appears charmed with it." Mme. de Maintenon's letters of this date endorsed these remarks. On 10th October she wrote: "I receive every day new favours from the King;" and only three months later, "he is loading me with riches, honours and everything that can make life agreeable. I shall never ask him for anything, and I now only think of serving him in the person of my mistress with such zeal, fidelity and assiduity as may manifest my gratitude."

Many years later at Saint-Cyr when speaking to the Blue Class she referred to her relations with Mme. de Montespan in her characteristic self-derogatory manner. "If either has cause to complain it is she," she declared, "for she may say with truth, 'I was the cause of her elevation; it was I who made her known and liked by the King, and she became the favourite while I was dismissed'." This air of self-depreciation is trying to her adherents, it was not honest to herself. She was too ready to seek the justification of others for all she did, and in doing so to invite their condemnation. "Was I wrong in accepting the King's friendship on the conditions I had laid down?" she asked her *demoiselles*, to whom in the same breath she preached on prudence, on unselfishness, on unworldliness in the easy tone of one who condemns everything because she herself failed to get pleasure from it. "I love her and can never persuade myself that she hates me," expressed her attitude to Mme. de Montespan, and she applied it to all the world. She was over-eager not to be in the wrong, and if she calculated too much, it was because she was intensely anxious to establish and preserve an exact balance between what others thought, what she herself thought, and what *le bon Dieu* would think.

In 1682 Louis wrote to her: "I have need of your consolation. You may withdraw whenever you are tired of telling me the truth." Her reply was given the following year: "I think no more of retiring, the King has made me promise not to leave him". Lamartine expressed the last word upon Louis's affection for her when he wrote: "An attachment to Mme. Maintenon seemed to him almost the same

thing as an attachment to virtue itself". She was the first to inspire in him a lasting wish for virtue, as she inspired Scarron to infuse a purer tone into his later writings.

In the zenith of his splendour, at the time of his greatest prestige, the terror of Europe, the idol of France, beloved alike by ministers, by servants, by the members of his Court, a dazzling luminary shedding light wherever he walked, Louis XIV. at the age of forty-seven was left a widower, and while the Queen's corpse still lay unburied he offered his hand to Mme. de Maintenon, then in her fiftieth year. At the moment of his bereavement she intended to efface herself, but La Rochefoucauld pushing her into the royal apartments, said, "This is not the time to leave the King, he has need of you".

It is probable that the marriage which was celebrated in a private oratory at Versailles by the Archbishop of Paris, took place in the first half of 1684. By Saint-Simon it was regarded as "the most profound humiliation, the most public, most lasting, most unheard-of".

Having attained the summit of ambition, Mme. de Maintenon was no happier than before. In her innermost heart she sighed for the days of her *salon*, regretting them, she herself says, "as the duck regrets its muddy pond". There is something sad and dreary in the picture of this woman raising herself little by little to a foremost position in the proud country of France and wishing herself back in the medley crowd and hurly-burly which long years before she had seemed only too willing to quit. Perhaps after all she mistook her vocation, and would have come closer to the joys of life had she but held

herself less rigidly erect, had she but relied a little less on ambition, a little more on love. "Before being at Court," she wrote, "I can testify that I had never known *ennui;* but I have experienced it thoroughly since then, and I believe I never could have borne up under it if I had not thought that it was there God wished me to be. There is no true happiness but in serving God." Her brother in reply to her petulant complaints, asked, "Had you then a promise of espousing the Eternal Father?" and remembering that after serving she ruled, and that her happiness in serving the King had turned to dissatisfaction, it is difficult not to echo her brother's irreverence and wonder upon what heights of ambition she would have rested content.

It is true that she was not acknowledged Queen, and that the story of her day at Court as told by herself to Mme. de Glapion was essentially, intensely dreary. Her room has been compared to a merchant's shop which once opened was never empty and in which the shopman's presence was always required. Visitors commenced to arrive at half-past seven in the morning and left in turn as those of higher rank were announced, until the King's presence dispelled them all. She could not dress until the King left for Mass and there had been no time to say her prayers. By this time the room "is like a church; a perpetual procession is going on, everybody passes through it; the comings and goings are endless". The same thing went on all day, even during meal-times, never a moment to herself, never a moment to pray, always liable to be called upon at any moment for consolation, for advice. "While the King continues to work I sup; but it is not once in

two months that I can do so at my ease. I feel that the King is alone or I have left him sad, or that M. Chamillart has almost finished with him; sometimes he sends and begs me to make haste. So that I am always hurried, and the only thing I can do is to eat very fast. . . . I have been about since six in the morning; I have not breathed freely the whole day. I hurry; I hurry so that I almost faint. At ten o'clock or a quarter past everybody goes away. There is my day. I am now alone and I take the relief of which I am in need; but often the anxieties and fatigues I have gone through keep me from sleeping."

For thirty years she reigned without a rival over the soul of one of the greatest of kings. "Parliaments, princes, cities, regiments, addressed themselves to her as to the King; none of the nobles of the realm, the cardinals and bishops knew any other way." She did not escape calumny, though it was probable that she did not play the odious parts attributed to her. If she were to blame for her share in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, at least she helped to establish a toleration which lasted throughout her husband's reign. Yet in the face of all this pomp and splendour, Fénelon wrote to cheer her in 1689: "God often tries others by crosses which appear as crosses. You he desires to crucify by apparent prosperity, and to give you a clear knowledge of the nothingness of the world by means of the wretchedness attached to all that is most dazzling therein."

In 1685 she founded at Saint-Cyr an institution for the gratuitous education of nobly-born but poor young women, and this work became the mainstay of

her declining years. Saint-Cyr is the Court in which she really reigned supreme, where her capacity for governing showed in its fulness. Mme. de Maintenon was almost Queen of France; she was absolutely Queen of Saint-Cyr. All that was pent within her of devoutness, of correctness, of influence for good, overflowed into the teachings which she lavished on her *demoiselles*. These characteristics which had been futile in the poultry-yard, anomalous in the *salon*, unappreciated at Court, fulfilled a destiny at Saint-Cyr.

At the entrance of the institution hung a portrait of the woman who was its presiding genius, and if in her later years she appeared cold and intractable it was not because her charm was dead but because it lived rather in her personal presence than in her actions. "She had," wrote a Dame de Saint-Cyr, "at fifty years of age a most agreeable tone of voice, an affectionate air, an open, smiling forehead, natural gesture with her beautiful hands, eyes of fire, and motions of an easy figure so cordial, so harmonious, that she put into the shade the greatest beauties of the Court. . . . At a first glance she seemed imposing, as if veiled in severity; the smile and the voice dispersed the cloud."

The archives of Saint-Cyr contain forty volumes of her letters, but a fraction of all she wrote. Her style is often compared to that of Mme. de Sévigné. "Mme. de Maintenon," said Baron Walckenaër, "is a more finished model of epistolary style than Mme. de Sévigné." He asserted that she always had a distinct end in view when writing. "The cleverness, proportion, elegance and justice of her thoughts, the subtlety of her reflections, enable her to attain

MADAME DE MAINTENON

AFTER A PORTRAIT BY LE BLANC

pleasantly the goal she aims at. Her progress is straight and unfaltering, she follows the road without striking against the bushes, without deviating to right or left." It was said of her that in her love of correctness she refused even to sin against the syntax! The first Napoleon also rated her epistolary achievements higher than those of Mme. de Sévigné, which he compared to "snow eggs it was possible to surfeit oneself with without overloading one's stomach".

Mme. de Maintenon died at Saint-Cyr on 15th August, 1719, and was buried in the church there. In 1794, when the sacred edifice was transformed into a hospital, her tomb was broken open and her remains thrown into a hole in the ground. It was a fate she shared with many royalties, and it may be said that on this day at least the unrecognised wife of Louis XIV. was treated like a queen.

That her reign was not more fortunate, more joyous, lay in the nature of the woman, in whom some human touch was lacking which even her marvellous abilities, her extraordinary triumphs could not replace. It was non-existent in her earlier days, it hovered near her when she presided over her *salon*, but it passed her by, and as the years rolled on it seemed more and more remote. The story of her life was the story of events, of incidents, of episodes, striking and full of interest, but strung together by a slender theme, that of ambition tempered by discretion. No chord of thrilling passion was struck, and whilst the woman was delightful in her early years by virtue of her sweet inconsequence, and awakens respect towards the last by her genuine devotion, she never for a moment blinds the critical faculty of those who study her by the sheer force of an abandonment of self.

VI. MADAME DU DEFFAND

THE SALON OF WIT

IN comparison with famous French *salons* of the purely social type that of Mme. du Deffand was more deeply tinged than the others by the indulgence in philosophical and philanthropic ideas consequent upon the state of mental unrest which preceded the Revolution in France. The gay lightheartedness, the wit and brilliancy, the play of intellectual weapons, usually identified with French habits of intercourse, conflicted with a rush of serious thought, and though little of its sparkle and brightness was dimmed, an element was added that was even less restful, less stable, more searching, more insatiate. The ancient faith was tottering before the inroad of new ideals, in the face of the adoption of new standards, and at a period when old landmarks were wilfully ignored or ruthlessly obliterated. A habit of morbid analysis, of introspection, a wish to dissect symptoms, conditions, nay, criticism itself, replaced the old forms of discourse, argument, pleasantry and repartee. Mme. du Deffand was a living example of the effect on the individual of this spirit of the day ; she embodied in herself the impassioned desire to seize upon the truth at all costs, to tear away from it the wrappings, the mockeries and the unessentials ; with the inevitable result that disgust and discontent succeeded upon the failure to extract fundamental

principles by means of probing, examining, and uprooting everything. And yet, in spite of this, or because of it, to be old and blind and of but little personal beauty weighed nothing against her extraordinary mental gifts, her quick judgment and her unerring social instincts. On the surface she appeared harsh, embittered, cold, contemptuous, scoffing, but within were warmth and gentle affection, a passion to be loved and cherished, an appeal made chiefly to those who were not too free with a response.

Born, probably, at the Château of Chamrond, of parents belonging to noble families of Bourgogne, Marie de Vichy Chamrond made her appearance in the world in December, 1697, a year after the death of Mme. de Sévigné and three years after the birth of Voltaire, who was her life-long friend although he did not escape the stinging lash of her tongue. She was sent at the age of six to the Convent of St. Madeleine de Traisnel, Rue de Charonne, Paris, where she developed symptoms of heresy and scepticism exceedingly alarming to her guardians and relatives. So determined was she in the line of thought she had chosen that it was at length arranged for her to see the famous preacher Massillon, who accorded her an interview in the hope of converting the young infidel. Alas, for his chances of success. He found her so clever, so vivacious, so charming, so full of good sense, that, after prescribing "un catéchisme de cinq sous" he took his departure from the convent more impressed by her delightful waywardness and wit than shocked by her want of faith.

Mlle. de Chamrond did not, it appears, greatly profit by the nuns' teaching at Traisnel, but she early learnt to think for herself, and came to the con-

clusion that life as she knew it was stale and unprofitable. The thought of becoming *religeuse* was insupportable to her, existence in the country was but a shade less dreary, and escape seemed impossible except through the usual channels of marriage, leaving out of consideration the identity of the second contracting party. Although high-spirited and of an independent nature she became an easy prey to *ennui*, which grew into a chronic disease and remained with her all her days. No doubt she was influenced by this spirit when she accepted an offer for her hand made by M. Jean Baptiste-Jacques de la Lande, Marquis du Deffand, who presented himself in the nick of time —she was already twenty-one and she had no *dot*— and who married her on 2nd August, 1718. The transplantation to Paris which followed the ceremony satisfied her for a time, much more so than her relations with her husband, whom she found prosaic, unintelligent and by no means entertaining. Fortunately he was willing to separate from her, and, once assured of her liberty, she plunged into the gay life which had appeared so alluring from afar. The fundamental stability of her character was now to stand her in good stead. Without ties or responsibilities, she was led into excesses and dissipation by such friends as Mme. de Prie, wife of the French Ambassador at Turin, whom later she visited in exile at Courbépine in Normandy, and Mme. de Parabère who was responsible for her presence at the *petits soupers* indulged in by the Regent and his intimates. Such follies might have seriously injured a woman of less recuperative moral powers. Although she became the mistress of Philippe d'Orleans, of Delrieu de Fargis and of others; although she in-

dulged temporarily in a frenzy for gambling, "la vilaine passion que le jeu," which lasted for three months; although she was a willing participant in orgies which rivalled in excess the worst of that riotous period, she emerged at least with her intellectual enjoyment unimpaired, with a heart untouched by scathing passion, with tastes for pursuits and gaieties of a much less harmful kind. She had tried her wings, and if they were singed in the flame of life, she withdrew them before they were useless for flight. She was honest with herself throughout and summed up her experiences in a single pithy phrase: "Je m'ennuyais; de là toutes mes sottises". One can almost see the accompanying shrug of the shoulders.

Actuated by one knows not what underlying motive, Mme. de Deffand endeavoured presently to bring about a more amicable understanding between herself and her husband, but without success, for she found herself more bored and more *triste* than ever before, nor did she fail to express in the presence of M. le Marquis the weariness and distaste she experienced. Once again he had the tact to efface himself, and it is probable that this ill-mated couple did not meet again until M. du Deffand lay on his deathbed. This second breach between husband and wife for the time being imperilled Mme. du Deffand's reputation, for the minor conventions were to be broken with less impunity than the laws of morality in the circle in which she moved. The Duchesse du Maine, however, came to her aid at this juncture, and she was soon drawn back into the swim of society and became one of the most brilliant satellites at the too brilliant court of Sceaux. Here she met many of the friends who influenced her later

life, among them Voltaire, Président Hénault, with whom she established a life-long connection, and Mme. de Staal, then Mlle. de Launay, who wrote of her "personne n'a plus d'esprit, et ne l'a plus naturel". D'Alembert, too, was one of the gay throng attracted by the dominant spirit of the Duchesse du Maine, one of the many devotees at the *nuits blancs* who played at science, studied nature under every aspect, organised pastoral *fêtes* and improvised masquerades; dilettantes of art, most of them, of learning or of music, Sainte-Aulaire and Malezieu, Abbé de Vaubrun and Cardinal de Polignac, "le plus beau parleur de son temps," and the most versatile and wittiest women in France, the Duchesse de Saint-Pierre, Duchesse d'Estrées, Mme. d'Estaing, Mme. the Marquise de Lambert, the Duchesse de Luynes, aunt of Mme. du Deffand, and possibly Mme. d'Epinay, friend of Rousseau. As for Mme. du Deffand herself she entered with spirit into these gay and fairy-like scenes of imagination and of myth, this perpetual carnival of glitter and tinsel, and she joined heartily in the water-parties, the charades, the picnics conducted *à la Decameron*, until she grew tired, as she did sooner or later of everything, and began to wonder why she was satisfied with a secondary part in any one else's *salon* where she was but a unit in a servile crowd, when she might as well hold receptions of her own, lead her guests, and centre their devotion in herself.

To conceive such an ideal plan was in her case to execute it. In 1742 she took a house in the Rue de Beaune, Paris, where she found it possible to entertain kindred spirits and establish congenial friendships with far more freedom than at Sceaux. In this

house, or, according to some authorities, in the one next door, Voltaire died in 1778, "stifled with roses" by the Parisian populace. Mme. du Deffand began her little receptions there immediately after her return from Forges, where she went to take the waters accompanied by Mme. de Pecquigny. This lady, whose name before her marriage with the Duc de Pecquigny was Anne-Joseph Bonnier de la Mosson, became later, as the Duchesse de Chaulnes, one of the habituées of Mme. du Deffand's *salon* and the subject of one of her most charming portraits; of her wit she said it was so singular that it was impossible to define it. "It can only be compared to space. That is to say it possesses all the dimensions, width, breadth and height. It takes all kinds of shapes but retains none. It is composed of an abundance of ideas each independent of the other, which are constantly destroyed to form again." When the Duchesse de Chaulnes was reproached in after years for having accepted a young financier aged twenty-five as a lover, she replied to her detractors, "A duchess is never more than thirty in the eyes of a commoner".

Whilst at Forges Mme. du Deffand was by no means amiably disposed towards her, and her letters to Président Hénault contain many ill-natured remarks, such as that she was quite mad, ate like an ape, that her hands were like paws, etc. It must be remembered that these letters were particularly bald and plain-spoken and reveal the relations between herself and their recipient which at that time were, as they have been aptly described, *quasi-conjugale*. Later they became more frigid, ending in a friendship of habit rather than of affection; but they lasted

until the Président's death in 1770. Walpole described the situation in a letter to Conway in 1765. "There are two or three houses where I go quite at my ease," he wrote, "am never asked to touch a card nor hold dissertations. Nay, I don't pay homage to their authors. Every woman has one or two planted in her house, and God knows how they water them. The old Président Hénault is the pagod at Mme. du Deffand's, an old blind *debauchée* of wit, where I supped last night. The Président is very near deaf, and much nearer superannuated. He sits by the table: the mistress of the house, who formerly was his, inquires after every dish on the table, is told who has eaten of which, and then bawls the bill of fare of every individual into the Président's ears. In short, every mouthful is proclaimed, and so is every blunder I make against grammar. Some that I make on purpose, succeed; and one of them is to be reported to the Queen to-day by Hénault, who is her great favourite." Sir James Macdonald was present that evening, as well as Mme. de Forcalquier and the Duchesse de la Vallière, daughter of the Duc d'Uzès and one of the handsomest women in France. This gathering took place at the Convent of St. Joseph, Rue St. Dominique, to which Mme. du Deffand had removed from the Rue de Beaune in 1747, and where she was installed in the apartments once occupied by Mme. de Montespan, whose arms ornamented the back of the grate in the bedroom. These rooms became famous for her *petits soupers*, and she remained in them until her death on 24th October, 1780, and for close upon thirty years she received there the literary and aristocratic celebrities of every European nationality. Her *salon* was pecu-

liarly broad and inclusive of all branches of thought; neither the political, the philosophic, nor the literary element dominated. The fashionable and the frivolous were welcomed equally with the learned, the courtly and noble with those who possessed no other wealth than brains enough to help them into prominence.

Now at length Mme. du Deffand had found her purpose in life, which was to establish a reputation as an infallible wit, to chase *ennui*, to entertain all those who succeeded in gaining her goodwill, to direct the sparkling discourse which, as a vital thread, bound together the ever-changing panorama of individuals, to eliminate if possible, or at least to glide over and suppress, such gloomy topics of conversation as were ever-ready at this hour to burst forth without warning; in short, to cultivate and foster those minor graces of society which are attributes of the perfect hostess and attain to an art which at that day was carried to the supreme point of finesse and elaboration.

Montesquieu, like Voltaire, found inspiration in Mme. du Deffand's society, Président Hénault and Pont-de-Veyle were her constant companions, Formont and d'Alembert vied with one another for a first place in her affection. Of these two she wrote to Mlle. de Lespinasse in 1754, "I have two intimate friends, Formont and D'Alembert, of whom I am passionately fond, not so much on account of their personal charm or their friendship for me, but because of their absolute sincerity". Formont united in himself a spirit of charming simplicity and ever-flowing gaiety. He was at ease with all the world, and all the world was at ease with him, and he helped

to unite the bond of friendship between Mme. du Deffand and Voltaire. He shared with Pont-de-Veyle the honour of being numbered among the most sincere of her early friends and of being genuinely regretted when death cut short their intimacy. Pont-de-Veyle was the son of M. de Ferriol and nephew of Mme. de Tencin; he was the author of the *Fat Puni* and the *Complaisant*. The *liaison intime* which existed between him and Mme. du Deffand endured for more than fifty years, although according to Grimm's account it was based on mutual indifference. A story was told by La Harpe that on the evening on which Pont-de-Veyle died Mme. du Deffand supped in company with Mme. de Marchais, and the guests condoled with her upon her loss. "Alas," she replied, "he died at six o'clock this evening; otherwise I should not have been here." Walpole also appeared to question the genuineness of her regret at the loss of her old friend, or as he whimsically put it, she "fancies she is more sorry than she fancied she should be: but it will make a vacuum in her room rather than in her entertainment". His description of Pont-de-Veyle written to Gray in 1766 is not remarkably pleasing. "Would not you expect this old man to be very agreeable?" he wrote, after mentioning some of his writings. "He can be so, but seldom is: yet he has another very different and very amusing talent, the art of parody, and is unique in his kind. He composes tales to the tunes of long dances; for instance he has adapted the Regent's 'Daphnis and Chloe' to one, and made it ten times more indecent; but is so old, and sings it so well, that it is permitted in all companies.. He has suc-

ceeded still better in *les caractères de la danse*, to which he has adapted words that express all the characters of love. With all this he has not the least idea of cheerfulness and conversation; seldom speaks but on grave subjects, and not often on them; is a humorist, very supercilious, and wrapt up in admiration of his own country, as the only judge of his merit. His air and look are cold and forbidding; but ask him to sing, or praise his works, his eyes and smiles open and brighten up. In short, I can show him to you: the self-applauding poet in Hogarth's 'Rake's Progress,' the second print, is so like his very features and very wig, that you would know him by it, if you came hither—for he certainly will not go to you."

Among Mme. du Deffand's intimate friends in the early *salon* days were M. and Mme. de Mirepoix, M. and Mme. de Forcalquier, Mme. de Luxembourg, Mme. de Luynes (Mme. du Deffand's aunt who was Lady of Honour to Queen Marie Leczinska and instrumental in obtaining an annuity of 6,000 livres for her niece), Mme. de Vintimille, the unfortunate mistress of Louis XV., for whom, as the story goes, he abandoned Mme. de Mailly her sister, Mme. de Flamarens, the De Choiseuls, M. des Alleurs, French Ambassador at Constantinople, and, foremost amongst them, the Chevalier d'Aydie, nephew of the Marquis de Sainte-Aulaire, lover of Mlle. Aïssé, whom he met at Mme. du Deffand's house about 1720. "One might believe that his head contained a second heart," she declared once of him, paraphrasing the remark about Fontenelle that in place of a heart he had a second brain. Mme. du Deffand wrote an excellent portrait of the

Chevalier, and also of M. le Comte de Forcalquier, one of those who returned the compliment by drawing up a description of the characteristics of his hostess. The latter gentleman was a special favourite among the guests, being gay, vivacious and witty, of warm and prolific imagination. His eyes were wide open, laughing and spiritual, and, according to Mme. de Flamarens, he had only to enter a room to brighten it. His wife's name appears constantly in Mme. du Deffand's letters. Forcalquier married Mlle. de Carbonnel de Canizy, widow of the Duc d'Antin, who was of a good appearance though *pétite*, with a round face, large eyes and a fine complexion. Mme. du Deffand called her the *Petit Chat*, *Minet* and *Bellissima* indiscriminately, and accused her wrongly of insanity and want of character. As a matter of fact Mme. de Forcalquier was by no means lacking in spirit. One day her husband forgot himself sufficiently to box her ears. Enraged by this, she determined to obtain a divorce and consulted two or three celebrated lawyers who advised her not to take proceedings because there were no witnesses to the assault. Whereupon she returned home, entered her husband's study and, giving him as good as she had received, said, "There is your box on the ears, my dear, it's no use to me for I can't do anything with it".

Mme. de Flamarens was one of the very few of Mme. du Deffand's feminine friends who was never in the wrong. Wise and witty, beautiful and virtuous, after her death her characteristics were summed up in a single phrase: "Elle fut belle, elle aima son mari et elle résista à Richelieu". Mme. du Deffand felt her loss sorely. Writing to Walpole in 1767,

MADAME DU DEFFAND

BY FORSHEL, AFTER DE CARMONTELLE

she said, "I had one friend, M. de Formont, for thirty years: I lost him; I loved two women passionately, one is dead, Mme. de Flamarens, the other is living, Mme. de Rochefort, who has proved herself false". It is supposed that the latter interfered between Mme. du Deffand and Formont—in itself an unpardonable crime—and an exceedingly laudatory portrait of her appeared from the pen of Président Hénault, a fact which would undoubtedly not redound to her credit in the eyes of his *amie*. It was said of her that, like Mme. Scarron, she gave suppers at which the roast was replaced by stories and the sweets by *bon mots*. Walpole had little but praise to give concerning her. "Mme. de Rochefort," he wrote, "is different from all the rest. Her understanding is just and delicate, with a *finesse* of wit that is the result of reflection. Her manner is soft and feminine, and, though a *savante*, without any declared pretensions. She is the *decent* friend of Monsieur de Nivernois, for you must not believe a syllable of what you read in their novels. . . . Monsieur de Nivernois lives in a small circle of dependent admirers, and Mme. de Rochefort is high priestess for a small salary of credit."

In the same letter to Gray, Walpole portrays several of the women who frequented the *salon* of St. Joseph in the early fifties, among them Mme. de Mirepoix, sister of the Prince of Beauvau, widow of the Prince of Lixin, who married secondly the Marquis of Mirepoix, Ambassador at Vienna and London, and later Maréchal of France. Rousseau in his *Confessions* gives vent to his surprise when he received an embrace from this lady on his hasty departure from Montmorency to avoid arrest after the publication

of *Emile*. He regarded her as cold and reserved, and not exempt from the natural haughtiness of the House of Lorraine. "She had never shown me much attention," he wrote in his usual characteristic style when discussing women. "Whether, flattered by an honour I had not expected, I endeavoured to enhance its value, or that there really was in the embrace a little of that commiseration natural to generous hearts, I found in her manner and look a kind of energy which penetrated me. I have since that time frequently thought that, acquainted with my destiny, she could not refrain from a momentary concern for my fate."

Montesquieu was especially charmed, nay, enchanted, by the quiet grace and lovable virtues of Mme. de Mirepoix. Président Hénault remarked that her face announced the true honesty of her soul. "Her understanding," wrote Walpole, "is excellent of the useful kind, and can be so when she pleases of the agreeable kind. She has read, but seldom shows it, and has perfect taste." He accused her, however, of being cold in manner but very civil, of being false, artful and insinuating when it was her interest to be so, although deterred by indolence and cowardice. Mme. de Mirepoix stood high in the favour of Louis XV. When an attempt was made to stab the king and Mme. de Pompadour, frightened at the turn of events, consulted d'Argenson with a view to asking his advice about taking her departure from Paris, Mme. de Mirepoix interfered and persuaded her to stay in the capital. D'Argenson, then Minister of War, was banished shortly after the episode; he was a good friend of Hénault's and before his exile-dom a frequent visitor at Mme. du Deffand's.

Two women with whom Mme. du Deffand was invariably upon the best and most intimate of terms were the Duchesse de Choiseul and Mme. la Maréchale de Luxembourg. The former, "si sage, si sensée, si précoce, si coquette," was the "chère grandmaman" of whom she said "perfection is her only fault". Mme. du Deffand was connected with the former Duc de Choiseul through her grandmother, and from this she derived the facetious "grandpapa" and "grandmamma" bestowed upon M. and Mme. de Choiseul in her correspondence. "The Duchesse de Choiseul," wrote Walpole to Gray, "is not very pretty but has fine eyes, and is a little model in waxwork, which not being allowed to speak for some time as incapable has a hesitation and a modesty, the latter of which the Court has not cured, and the former of which is atoned for by the most interesting sound of voice, and forgotten in the most elegant turned propriety of expression. Oh! it is the gentlest, amiable, civil little creature that ever came out of a fairy egg! So just in its phrases and thoughts, so attentive and good natured! Everybody loves it but its husband, who prefers his own sister, the Duchesse de Grammont, an amazonian, fierce, haughty dame, who loves and hates arbitrarily, and is detested. Mme. de Choiseul, passionately fond of her husband, was the martyr of this union, but at last submitted with a good grace; has gained a little credit with him, and is still believed to idolise him. But I doubt it—she takes too much pains to profess it." Mme. du Deffand's portrait of Mme. de Choiseul, drawn in November, 1766, is one of the most eulogistic from her pen. She was also more just to Mme. de Grammont, who was generally liked for her strong and

affectionate character and her frank and honourable bearing.

Undoubtedly one of the most imposing figures in the *salon* was that of Mme. la Maréchale de Luxembourg, upon whom Walpole bestowed the verdict, "Very handsome, very abandoned, and very mischievous. Her beauty is gone, her lovers are gone, and she thinks the devil is coming. This dejection has softened her into being rather agreeable, for she has wit and good-breeding; but you would swear by the restlessness of her person and the horrors she cannot conceal, that she had signed the compact, and expected to be called upon in a week for the performance."

Mme. de Luxembourg was the patroness of Rousseau, and, when he was staying on the Duc's estate at Montmorency, did for him what Mme. du Deffand did for Voltaire. The former's *salon* was contemporaneous with the latter's but never in rivalry, as, on the contrary, was that of Mme. Geoffrin, then also at the height of its fame. "She and Mme. Geoffrin are no friends; so if you go thither, don't tell her of it," wrote Walpole to Conway in 1774, and in the same letter he warned Conway regarding Mlle. de Lespinasse whose *salon* was then in full swing after her break with Mme. du Deffand, saying: "I beg of you not to let anybody carry you thither". Mme. de Luxembourg was one of the few whose kindly interest in Mlle. de Lespinasse after the rupture did not injure her in the eyes of Mme. du Deffand. She knew how to retain most people's friendship. Sister of the Duc de Villeroy, she married first the Duc de Boufflers, but must not be confused with the Comtesse of that name. Rousseau met her origin-

ally at the house of Mme. Dupin before her second marriage, but did not become intimate for ten or twelve years after this introduction. Although he had heard that her manners were engaging, he expected to find her somewhat unapproachable, but scarcely had he set eyes on her when he was subjugated by her delightful personality. "I thought her charming," he wrote in the *Confessions*, "with that charm proof against time, and which had the fullest power upon my heart. I expected to find her conversation satirical and full of pleasantries and points. It was not so; it was much better. The conversation of Mme. de Luxembourg is not remarkably full of wit: it has no sallies, nor even *finesse;* it is exquisitely delicate, never striking but always pleasing. Her flattery is the more intoxicating as it is natural; it seems to escape her involuntarily, and her heart to overflow because it is too full. I thought I perceived in my first visit that, notwithstanding my awkward manner and embarrassed expression, I was not displeasing to her." Rousseau appeared occasionally in the *salon* at St. Joseph, but the friendship between Mme. de Luxembourg and Mme. du Deffand was not strong enough to overcome the fact that there was no love lost between Rousseau and Voltaire which made such intercourse awkward, undesired and undesirable. Mme. du Deffand did not win the approbation of the author of the *Confessions*, as appears from certain passages therein. "Besides the Abbé de Boufflers," he wrote in book xi., "by whom I was not beloved, and Mme. de Boufflers, in whose opinion I was guilty of wrongs which neither women nor authors ever pardon, the other friends of Mme. la

Maréchale (de Luxembourg) never seemed much disposed to become mine, among others Monsieur le Président Hénault who, enrolled amongst authors, was not exempt from their weaknesses; also Mme. du Deffand and Mlle. de Lespinasse, both warmly attached to Voltaire, and the intimate friends of D'Alembert, with whom the latter at length lived—however upon an honourable footing, for it cannot be understood I mean otherwise. I first began to interest myself for Mme. du Deffand when the loss of her eyes made her an object of commiseration in mine, but her manner of living, so contrary to my own that her hour of going to bed was almost mine for rising, her unbounded passion for trifling wit, the importance she gave to every kind of printed trash, either complimentary or abusive, the despotism and transports of her oracles, her excessive admiration or dislike of everything, which did not permit her to speak on any subject without convulsions, her inconceivable prejudices, invincible obstinacy, and the mad enthusiasm to which all this carried her in her passionate judgments, speedily disgusted me, and diminished the attention I wished to pay her. I neglected her, and she perceived it; this was enough to set her in a rage; and although I was sufficiently aware how much a woman of her character was to be feared, I preferred exposing myself to the scourge of her hatred rather than to that of her friendship."

In 1750, the year in which Mme. du Deffand's eyesight began to fail, she was called to the sickbed of her husband, whose death took place on the 24th of June. It is probable that at the last she asked him to condone the whimsical indifference she had shown him, for in spite of their long estrangement his loss

troubled her. From thenceforward, though little was added to her personal liberty, she had more pecuniary independence, and the first use she made of it was to express her disgust for life in Paris and turn her back on it, as she declared for ever, in the hope of finding rest and repose in the provinces. At various times she had felt the need of something different to the endless round of gaiety to which she was accustomed and had endeavoured to devote her attention to more serious things. These attempts had always failed, however, and her efforts at renunciation invariably ended the same way. During one of them she wrote to La Harpe, telling him of her good resolutions and self-denial, and adding to her protestations, "As for rouge and the Président, I will not do them the honour of renouncing them". As was to be expected, her withdrawal from the whirlpool of society was a failure and did not last. Never genuinely at her ease in the country, she found life there as irksome as in earlier days, nor did she derive from it the tranquillity for which she longed. It was evident that she was out of her natural element and unable to be happy without her little suppers, of which she said, "qu'ils étaient une des quatres fins de l'homme". The other three objects of life had, she declared, escaped her memory. The bemoaning and beseeching of her friends which she had at first ignored, and to which D'Alembert had perhaps added the most persuasive plea, at length produced the desired effect, and in 1753 she returned to Paris and was once more installed in her convent quarters. One very important result of her sojourn in the provinces was the connection with Mlle. de Lespinasse, fraught at first with so much peace and satisfaction

and later with heart-burning and jealousy for both of them. The meeting took place at the Château de Chamrond in the household of Mme. du Deffand's brother, the Comte de Vichy. Mlle. de Lespinasse was the illegitimate sister of the Comtesse de Vichy, and the natural daughter of the Comtesse d'Albon; the name of her father was until recently shrouded in mystery, but the Marquis de Ségur [1] has thrown a new and sinister light upon her birth, in naming the Comte de Vichy (the Comtesse D'Albon's cousin) himself, as her father. Since she was born in wedlock during the lifetime of the Comte d'Albon the Vichy family lived in fear lest she should claim her rightful position and inheritance, at the same time bringing to light this terrible family scandal, and kept her in a condition of extreme dependence and seclusion, enforcing upon her domestic duties and the task of acting as governess to their children. At the time of Mme. du Deffand's visit Mlle. de Lespinasse was twenty years of age, by no means pretty, but possessed of extraordinary mental gifts and a power of pleasing all with whom she came in contact. Captivated by her wit and self-reliance, with pity for her awakened by the sad circumstances and uncongenial employment to which she was condemned, interested perhaps by her relationship, Mme. du Deffand, who was now practically sightless, desired to engage her as a companion to herself; a proposition to which the young girl gratefully agreed. For many months the affair hung fire, for the Comte and Comtesse de Vichy were exceedingly loth to part with one who had it in her power to cruelly injure them, as they believed; and in making her arrangements Mme. du

[1] *Julie de Lespinasse*, by the Marquis de Ségur.

Deffand imposed upon Mlle. de Lespinasse the condition that she was to renounce for ever a hope she had never seriously entertained of establishing her identity at the expense of her mother's reputation. Further, she besought from her a guarantee of sincerity and good faith. "The slightest artifice, or even the most trifling little art, if you were to put it into your conduct, would be intolerable to me . . . you must, my queen, resolve to live with me with the utmost truth and sincerity, and never use insinuation nor any exaggeration; in a word, never *deviate* and never lose one of the greatest charms of youth, which is candour," she wrote to her new companion in February, 1754, sixteen months after the first negotiations for the engagement had been instituted and shortly before its commencement. In the light of what occurred between the two women ten years later these words, with their note of warning, have a curiously prophetic sound.

From the first day upon which Mlle. de Lespinasse was installed in the capacity of friend and companion at the Convent of St. Joseph, she showed as much ease in Parisian society as though she had known no other conditions. The statement made by her patroness, "I expect to make you desired," was entirely superfluous, for the new-comer was possessed of all the gifts which made her desirable for her own sake, and needed no assistance in winning the general approbation of the frequenters of the *salon*, and more especially the particular approbation of D'Alembert who was strongly drawn towards her at their very first meeting.

D'Alembert was shortly to become the chief star of Mme. du Deffand's assemblies, for in 1754, as a

reward for his work on the *Encyclopædia*, he was elected a member of the French Academy, and to establish relations with this institution of learning meant to any hostess advancement in the social standing of her *salon*. To possess a President among the guests was an excellent thing, but to boast of an Academician was better still, and from the day when D'Alembert entered upon his new honours, Mme. du Deffand's *salon* burst forth into sudden radiance and glowed inwardly, attracting all the learned and ambitious who desired to bask in its light and warmth.

To describe fully the character of D'Alembert would entail an attempt to tell the story of the intellectual awakening of pre-revolutionary France. If Voltaire was the creative spirit of the movement, D'Alembert was a typical example of the intellectual workers, the sound logicians, the honest philosophers of which that movement was composed, and he embodied in himself many of the qualities which were necessary for the achievement of the great purpose to which the thinkers of the day had lent their utmost energies. If Mme. du Deffand's portrait of this man, who was at first almost as a son to her, is not complete, it is at least just from her own point of view, and it shows a wonderfully prophetic insight. "Disinterestedness and truth compose his character," she wrote, "generous, compassionate, he has all the essential qualities except those of society, he is wanting in a certain gentleness and amenity which give charm, his heart does not appear to be very tender, and one is forced into the belief that he has more virtue in him than sentiment. One has not the pleasure of finding in his case that one is necessary to him. He asks nothing of his friends but prefers to give services

rather than to receive them. Gratitude would be too much of a duty to him, it hampers his freedom. All constraint of whatever kind it may be is insupportable to him, and one defines him perfectly in saying that he is a slave to liberty."

A more human picture of the man is that by Marmontel; "the gayest and liveliest, the man, too, whose gaiety was the most amusing was D'Alembert," he wrote in his *Mémoires*. "After spending his morning in algebraical calculations and in resolving problems of dynamics and astronomy, he issued from his lodgings like a scholar let loose from school, with no view but that of amusing himself; and this deep, solid and luminous mind took then so animated and diverting a turn that we quite forgot the philosopher and the learned man and saw only the agreeable companion. This natural gaiety flowed from a pure mind, void of passion, satisfied with itself, and every day enjoying some new truth by which his labours were crowned."

During the years immediately before and after Mlle. de Lespinasse's arrival at Mme. du Deffand's a number of fresh visitors joined the *salon* and met in the apartment familiarised to us by the Comte des Alleurs as upholstered "de moire jaune aux noeuds couleur de feu". Marmontel himself, never a great favourite with Mme. du Deffand, and a sincere admirer of the "ardent soul, fiery nature and romantic imagination" of Mlle. Lespinasse, was one of the additions, a second was Montesquieu, the grave and learned, "ce bonne homme dans un grand homme," as the Chevalier d'Aydie called him. The title of his well-known book, *L'Esprit des Lois*, is responsible for one of Mme. du Deffand's best known *bon*

mots. In describing it she said, "C'est de l'esprit sur les lois". It was Montesquieu who, in reply to Mme. du Deffand's remarks that from the oyster to the angel nothing was truly happy, appealed to her as a *gourmande* to remember that the fate of the oyster was after all not so disagreeable, "qu'elle a trois estomacs, et que se serait bien le diable si dans ces trois il n'y en a pas un de bon". There was M. Saladin, a grave and amiable person, who was indisputably a man of wit; Duché, Abbé Sigorne, Abbé de Canaye, M. de Mautpertius, "l'amiable inconstant," as the Comte des Alleurs declared him to be, and the Duchesse de Saint-Pierre, Mme. Dupré de Saint-Maur, the Comte de Fleury, General Bulkeley, and a sprinkling of diplomats who gave to the *salon* its political and cosmopolitan flavour which helped the more to distinguish it from the exclusively literary receptions of Madame Geoffrin. The group of foreign ambassadors and envoys was constantly changing, as old friends dropped out and new ones took their places. Prominent among its members was M. de Bernstorf, the Danish Envoy Extraordinary at Paris, who was recalled to his own country in 1750, and whose love of society made him very welcome at elegant suppers, who was as discreet as he was gallant, and who said of Mme. du Deffand (when later she sacrificed his friendship to the jealous antipathy of Walpole) "that it was impossible to forget her if one had once had the honour of knowing her". She certainly possessed this hold upon her friends, and, to judge from the correspondence of the Baron de Scheffer, Envoy of Sweden, her power lay no less in the qualities of her heart than in the charm of her wit. This was contrary to the usual opinion, for

Mme. du Deffand was accused of being unemotional and unfeeling in an age when it was the fashion to simulate sentiment and affect fine phraseology, and, through sheer love of straightforwardness, she refused to do either. Scheffer's letters to her were written between 1751 (in November of which year he was recalled to Sweden, leaving his brother to represent him) and 1754. They are interesting on account of the detail they contain concerning her intimate friends, for the glimpses they give of her character, and for the philosophical and political reflections contained in them which throw a light on the style of conversation of which she held the reins.

Besides these two distinguished ambassadors who were amongst the assiduous visitors at the early gatherings held by Mme. du Deffand, many others counted it an honour to show her their respect and attention. William Pulteney, Lord Bath, formerly minister, the old adversary of Robert Walpole, was in France in 1749, and wrote to Mme. du Deffand on 25th April, 1751 : " I often recall the pleasant suppers which I had at your house in the most amiable society, when the conversation was always as enjoyable as it was informative. I particularly remember one evening when the talk turned upon the history of England. How surprised and confused I was to find that the people who were of that assembly knew more about it than I did myself."

In 1754 Mme. du Deffand was totally blind, but she never for a moment relaxed the interest she took in entertaining her friends, and the vacancies which occurred from time to time in her circle were filled up again as soon as they were created. Mme. de Rochefort withdrew because she preferred to be hostess

at the receptions held by M. de Nivernois than to be of secondary importance at Mme. du Deffand's. Mme. de Clermont, the future Princesse de Beauvau, Mme. de Broglie, Mme. d'Aiguillon and Mme. de Luxembourg replaced in intimacy Mme. de Flamarens who was dead, Mme. de Forcalquier and Mme. de Mirepoix who were estranged. Vernage, the famous doctor, l'Abbé du Gué, solid and precise, the Chevalier de Laurency, Mme. de Choiseul-Betz, Mme. d'Héricourt and La Harpe, Rousseau, Grimm and Mme. de Genlis, were all guests more or less intimate about the sixties. Diderot paid one visit, found the atmosphere uncongenial and never repeated the experiment. Formont and D'Aydie died in 1758 and 1760 respectively, the former, who was "la bonté incarnée," being an almost irreparable loss to the circle of old friends. In 1760 Mme. du Deffand was feeling her solitude keenly, in spite of the fact that she reigned over one of the best frequented *salons*. She felt herself to be alone in a crowd indifferent and unsympathetic to her, and towards the end of the year she carried on a correspondence with Voltaire which shows that her ideas were not altogether in harmony with those of the Encyclopædists, whose work bored her, whose reasoning seemed to her to be false sophistry and paradox, and who, according to her ideas, whilst they were not wanting in sincerity and intellectuality, seemed lacking in some of the finer instincts of the heart and of good taste. She believed them to be striving after a celebrity beyond their reach, and whilst she was careful to point to D'Alembert as an exception to the rule (for she had a very high opinion of his intellectuality and honesty), it is practically certain that these views were coloured

to some extent by his ever-increasing indifference to herself. The relations between them became more and more obviously strained, and in 1763 it was clear that their friendship was on the point of breaking.

Undoubtedly the climax of this disagreement was brought about through the actions of Mlle. de Lespinasse, who, usurping the intellectual sovereignty which Mme. du Deffand guarded with the utmost jealousy, profited by the old lady's habit of sleeping through the day and late into the evening to establish a small reception of her own, an hour or so before the large one, in her private room. D'Alembert was the first to encourage this "petit salon de contrabande". Evidently he saw nothing in it unfair to Mme. du Deffand, or if such a doubt existed in his mind he preferred to ignore it. He was in full sympathy with Mlle. de Lespinasse, drawn closely to her by like accidents of birth and fortune. His example was followed by Turgot, D'Ussé, Chastellux, Marmontel and others; and they undoubtedly culled by the aid of Mlle. de Lespinasse the most sweet-scented and the freshest blossoms from Mme. du Deffand's own bouquet of news and wit. Such artifice—it must be held to be more than a trifling art—could not remain for ever undetected. Growing suspicious of something that was taking place behind her back, Mme. du Deffand made an early opportunity of discovering for herself what was going on. She entered her *soi-disant* companion's room to find there an animated assembly of her own guests; a usurpation so insolent, an ingratitude so perfidious, a rivalry so menacing, was laid bare to her at one glance. "It was nothing less to her mind than treachery," said Marmontel; "she uttered loud outcries, accusing the poor girl of

stealing her friends, and declaring she would no longer warm that serpent in her bosom."

Thus the arrangement which had lasted for ten years ended instantaneously, for, struck by a blow to her righteous pride, to her egotistical demands, her habits and her affections, Mme. du Deffand conducted herself with inexorable severity and implacable dignity, and hunted down the woman who had abused her credulity and confidence. By the line of action she chose, she was enabled to regain an authority which had been severely endangered and which pardon would certainly have compromised for ever.

D'Alembert was commanded by Mme. du Deffand to choose between herself and her rival and he went over to the enemy; Turgot, Chastellux, the Comte d'Anlézy, Marmontel, the Duchesse de Châtillon, the Abbé de Boismont, Loménie de Brienne, among others, followed suit, not all of them, however, breaking completely with their original hostess. Président Hénault himself declared sympathy with Mlle. de Lespinasse, and according to a report which is hardly to be credited, offered himself to her in marriage. The Duchesse de Luxembourg bestowed upon the delinquent, who was reduced to the paltry income left her by her mother—some twelve pounds a year—a complete set of furniture for the apartment in the Rue de Belle-Chasse which was to become as famous in its way as the Convent of St. Joseph, and the Duc de Choiseul was instrumental in obtaining an annual grant for her from the King.

In spite of storm and stress, in spite of the loss of the Encyclopædists who rallied round Mlle. de Lespinasse, the fame of Mme. du Deffand's *salon* con-

tinued to grow ever greater in these succeeding years and the gaps caused in the ranks were speedily filled. There were now present the Beauvaus, the Broglies, the Paulmys, the Choiseuls, the Briennes, Macdonald, Holderness, and last but by no means least, Walpole, the privileged individual who absorbed and tyrannised over her life and sensibility to the end, for everything centred in him, everything was made subservient to his wishes. In a minor degree he became to the *salon* of Mme. du Deffand what Chateaubriand was to be later to the assemblies of Mme. Récamier.

The most comprehensive picture of the woman whose friendship he appeared to be always keeping at bay was addressed by Walpole to Thomas Gray in 1766, but his letters from that time onward are full of references to his "dear old blind friend," and many of them show a fund of deep feeling for her with which he is but rarely credited. "Mme. du Deffand," he wrote, "was for a short time mistress of the Regent, is now very old and stone-blind, but retains all her vivacity, wit, memory, judgment, passions and agreeableness. She goes to operas, plays, suppers and Versailles; gives suppers twice a week; has everything new read to her; makes new songs and epigrams, ay, admirably, and remembers every one that has been made these fourscore years. She corresponds with Voltaire, dictates charming letters to him, contradicts him, is no bigot to him or anybody, and laughs both at the clergy and the philosophers. In a dispute, into which she easily falls, she is very warm, and yet scarce ever in the wrong; her judgment on every subject is as just as possible; on every point of conduct as wrong as

possible; for she is all love and hatred, passionate for her friends to enthusiasm, still anxious to be loved, I don't mean by lovers, and a vehement enemy, but openly. As she can have no amusement but conversation, the least solitude and *ennui* are insupportable to her, and put her into the power of several worthless people, who eat her suppers when they can eat nobody's of higher rank; wink to one another and laugh at her; hate her because she has forty times more parts—and venture to hate her because she is not rich."

From the very first Mme. du Deffand betrayed a deep, an overpowering sympathy with the brilliant and original Englishman who was so different from any one she had met previously. It was not until the end of 1765 that he became intimate with her, and he was then close upon fifty years of age whilst she was almost seventy. Their friendship lasted for about fifteen years, and was marred by nothing more serious than Mme. du Deffand's ill-managed attempts at suppression and Walpole's too patent desire not to suffer his relations with her to be misunderstood. In the later sixties he made two journeys to Paris, the first from 23rd August, 1767, to 9th October of that year, and the second from 18th August to the 5th of October, 1769. The correspondence between them began on the 19th of April, 1766, Walpole having left Paris on the 17th after staying there for seven months previously, dating from the 14th of September, 1765. The first mention of her in his letters is his presence at her supper-table on 5th October of that year. Further visits to Paris took place in 1771 and 1775, and the correspondence continued through the good offices of Wiart, Mme.

HORACE WALPOLE, FOURTH EARL OF ORFORD

AFTER A PORTRAIT BY ROSALBA

du Deffand's faithful attendant and secretary, until close upon her death in 1780.

In the absence of Walpole and after the death of Formont, Hénault and Pont-de-Veyle were the most important regular members of the *salon* and their allegiance lasted and was accepted until death. Mme. du Deffand never entirely forgave those of her personal friends who had preferred to side with Mlle. de Lespinasse against her, and in spite of the fact that D'Alembert returned little by little to the old groove after the death of the woman he had loved so purely and so disinterestedly, Mme. du Deffand, who when informed of this occurrence said unmoved, "She had much better have died fifteen years earlier and then I should not have lost D'Alembert," never again bestowed her full confidence upon him nor renewed the relations which had formerly existed between them.

The addition of Walpole to the *salon* in the sixties was the signal for an invasion of illustrious Englishmen, beginning with Lord Holderness, David Hume and Selwyn, and continued by Gibbon, Burke, Fox and others—Newton had been a guest much earlier—whilst the melancholy Macdonald and the jovial Crauford represented the Scotch, Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane the American element, the Prince de Ligne and the Chevalier de Lisle, the Marquis de Paulmy, son of the Marquis d'Argenson, being representatives of her own countrymen who had recently been added to her circle. Many old friends remained in evidence, the Broglies, the Choiseuls and the imperious Mme. de Grammont, Mme. Harenc, l'Abbé Barthélemy, most spiritual of lovers, and the Comtesse de Boufflers, *née* Saujon, whom Mme. du Deffand

called l'Idole du Temple, because she was the mistress of the Prince de Conti and he lived at the Temple in his capacity of Grand Prieur of the Order of Malta. "She is two women," said Walpole of her, "the upper and the lower. I need not tell you that the lower is gallant, and still has pretensions. The upper is very sensible, too, and has a measured eloquence that is just and pleasing—but all is spoiled by an unrelaxed attention to applause. You would think she was always sitting for her picture to her biographer."

Although Mme. du Deffand hospitably opened her doors to men of letters of various nationalities, they rarely ranked high in her estimation, and perhaps the only one whom she really admired and loved amongst them was Voltaire. With her wonderful faculty for clever speeches and her pointed manner of summing up a truth in a word or two, she ranged her choicest friends as follows: Voltaire was "son ami d'esprit," Walpole "son ami de cœur," and Mme. de Choiseul "son amie d'esprit et cœur".

Towards the end of the sixties a change became apparent in the nature of the *salon*, chiefly caused by Mme. du Deffand's intense pre-occupation in Walpole and his affairs. Corresponding with him during his absence filled much of her time; when he was present both heart and mind were occupied in ministering to his entertainment. She threw her all into this last stake of the game, her intellectual wealth was spent for him alone, for others she was bankrupt, and the effect became evident in a change of her habits. It was no longer only the elect who were admitted to her supper-table, but a crowd of nobility, royalty, foreigners and the wealthy; quality

was sacrificed to quantity, exclusive choice gave way before the claims of rank, pleasure became less an end than spectacular effect. As her *salon* became more celebrated, more sought after, it was less and less amusing, and more and more commonplace. Foreign officials, foreign ambassadors, foreign royalties, after being presented to the King were presented to Mme. du Deffand, and she sat in the midst of all this gaiety, to which she had looked for her sole escape from *ennui*, and grew ever less contented, ever more wearied, more indifferent to the friends with whom she had surrounded herself. Whilst, however, she chose to adopt this attitude herself, she never pardoned the appearance of it in others. She lavished bitter reproaches upon De Beaumont, the Baron de Breteuil and M. de Guibert for neglecting her when they refrained from visiting her because they feared to be bored and to bore others.

Indeed she showed much caprice at this time in her friendships and enmities. New acquaintances were taken up constantly and dropped as freely, everything depended on the humour of the moment, and at times when Walpole showed coolness or repulse, when he made her the butt of his reproaches or of his sarcasms, she, poor woman, fell into an "abyss of wretchedness," and doubtless worked off her overwrought feelings upon whomsoever happened to be close at hand. Mlle. de Lespinasse had been replaced by a Mlle. Sanadon (called indiscriminately La Sanadona or La St. Chrysostôme in the correspondence) who was all that was excellent and admirable in companions; she was doubtless also long-suffering if the truth were known, for Mme. du Deffand was "noctivigulus" and turned night into

day. It is true that she promised Walpole to reform in this respect and to go to bed not later than midnight, but it would be difficult to believe that she carried out her intentions literally; she was too restless, too ill at ease for that. And in order to drown her sense of the futility of life she threw herself and all her energies into a feverish search for something new. Mme. de Forcalquier was taken back into favour after a period of estrangement, but the change was only temporary; no one was exempt from the occasional lash of her tongue, the sting of her irritability. Mme. de Choiseul suffered at her hands and Mme. de Villeroy. Mme. de Valbelle, Mme. de Choiseul-Betz (*la petite sainte*), Mme. d'Aiguillon (*la grosse duchesse*), friend of Richelieu, Mesdames de Cambis, De Valentinois, De Caraman—le Comte de Caraman was the nephew of Mme. de Mirepoix—Mme. d'Anville, even Mesdames de Marchais, de Houdetot, and de Lauzun were at the mercy of her moods. Her letters are full of names of the people she knew and who visited her at this period, among them Lord Grantham and his brother, the Churchills, Miss Pitt, Miss Cholmondeley, Sir John and Lady Millar, the Princesse de Monaco, D'Avarai and the Stainvilles; a wilderness of people, and their visits a nightmare of unrest. M. de Gontaut, the Prince de Beaufremont, the Duc de Guignes, M. de Liancourt, the Bishop de Saint-Omer, D'Arras, Président de Cotte, M. de Bucy and M. Necker succeeded one another haphazard in her favour, either as accident brought them into prominence or caused the downfall of others, and much the same thing happened in much the same way to Hume, Fox, Gibbon, Burke, the Duke of Rich-

mond, Lord Rochford and M. de Viry, Ambassadors respectively of England and Sardinia, the serious M. de Marmora, the adorable M. Caraccioli, M. de Gleichen and M. de Creutz, envoys from Sweden and Denmark, and M. de Schouwaloff, the Russian who was so French—favourite at one time of the Czarina, who visited Walpole at Strawberry Hill; a bewildering and ever-changing crowd, extraordinary on account of the shallow worldliness of the units composing it, and barely leavened by a sparse sprinkling of wits and writers, the more renowned among whom were La Harpe, Marmontel, Dorat, Saurin and Beaumarchais, the watchmaker-playwright.

La Harpe read *Sophocles*, Mlle. Clairon the actress recited *Phêdre* and *Agrippina*, Goldoni a comedy of his own, Le Kain acted a scene from *Des Loix de Minos*, Mlle. Suin, the comedienne, played Glück's music and Huber cut silhouette portraits of the guests, remarkable for their likeness. At such times the *salon* was at its gayest, but when Walpole was absent the soul of it departed and Mme. du Deffand mourned over its lifelessness; not even the presence of the King of Sweden, the King of Denmark, or the Emperor Joseph, all of whom wished to see, to chat and to sup with "the old *debauchée* of wit," served to reanimate what to her was but a fleshless skeleton that she regarded with ever-growing weariness and loathing.

There is much that is pitiful and pathetic in the letters which Mme. du Deffand despatched persistently to England in Walpole's absence from Paris; beneath the story of the endless round of visits received and paid is the heart-cry of an old and lonely woman, pleading for the love and sym-

pathy which seems ever to have been denied her. She, to whom so much was given in earlier years, counts all that as nought against the thing which appears to her the most desirable on earth and which she knows to be so certainly beyond her reach. The touching reality of this very appeal for affection makes all else appear unreal to her. "I admired the numerous company who visited me yesterday evening," she wrote on Monday, the 20th October, 1766, describing her Sunday supper-party, "men and women appeared to me to be mere machines. They came, they went, they spoke, they laughed without thinking, without reflecting, without feeling; each played his part through sheer force of habit. Mme. la Duchesse d'Aiguillon burst into fits of laughter, Mme. de Forcalquier disdained every one, Mme. de la Vallière prattled about everything. The men did not play their parts any better, and I was plunged into the blackest reflections; it occurred to me that I had spent my life among illusions, that I myself had dug the pits into which I had fallen; that my judgments had been false and rash, and always too precipitate; and, in short, that I did not know any one really well, that they knew me no better, and that perhaps I was not even sure of knowing myself." And again in 1768: "My suppers on Sundays are deplorable; I reflected yesterday that I tormented myself by inviting people; there was nobody I cared to listen to and nobody I wished to make listen to me, and yet I have to confess that I prefer this to being alone". In 1770 she makes the same note of complaint, but more facetiously. "This evening I am expecting les Bellissima, les Grossissima, les Bétissima, et tous les Ennuyeussissima; je suis Tris-

tissima." Poor lady, in spite of her protests of weariness, she had no alternative but to continue according to the habits she had formed, and her letters to Walpole teem with details of her suppers at home and her suppers elsewhere throughout the week. One feels sure that in an injudicious moment Walpole requested her to send him a list of her guests, and she carried out this programme literally, with the result that she wrote pages of such chit-chat as "I gave a supper to M. and Mme. Fitzroy (Lord and Lady Southampton), to Mrs. Rachel Lloyd (long housekeeper at Kensington Palace), to George Augustus Selwyn and to the Earl of Carlisle, who are perhaps coming again to-night, though I am afraid of having too many: not only will there be Mme. d'Aiguillon, upon whom I had not reckoned, but I imagine she will bring M. de Richelieu," etc.; or again: "To-night I am giving supper to Beauvau, the Archbishop of Toulouse (her great-nephew) and Pont-de-Veyle. To-morrow is my usual Sunday assembly to which the Ambassadors come as it pleases them; Italians, Swedes, even Laplanders are welcomed; it is all the same to me." On the day following the entertainment, she added, "My supper yesterday gave me no pleasure at all," and proceeded to criticise her guests. "The lady (the Princesse de Beauvau) was intolerable, her husband submits blindly, more through idleness and indifference than because his temper is worn out, the Archbishop has vivacity and justice and enough uprightness because up till now he has had no need to be found lacking in it, my dear old friend Pont-de-Veyle cares for nothing but to enjoy and divert himself," and so on and so on. There are more interesting glimpses when we

are told of Dr. Benjamin Franklin seated beside her, a fur bonnet on his head, spectacles on his nose, amidst a group of diplomatists who, had only Fox and Fitzpatrick been present, might have represented a gathering in the English House of Commons, with the royalist party in the minority; or when she declares that her guests cannot be prevented from gambling at her house through the night and until late in the morning, and that she is concerned about their loses, especially those of Fox, who rose from the table a loser of 450 louis, and Crauford who has still two days' risk to run. .

On the whole, however, it is impossible not to echo Walpole's remark that she was too eager about what happened every day and that she was "delicious" as often as he could "get her fifty years back". A week's engagements which may be taken as typical of these daily happenings were described by her in November, 1767. On the Tuesday she was invited to the house of Mme. de Valentinois, but preferred to stay with Président Hénault and did not reach her proposed destination until midnight. Wednesday evening she spent at the English Ambassador's with Milady Holland and Milords Clanbrassil and Carlisle; Selwyn passed the early part of the evening at the house of the Duchesse de Praslin, wife of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and joined the party about midnight, as also did Mme. de Forcalquier. The Beauvaus and their daughter, the Comtesse de Noailles and her daughter had supper at Président Hénault's on Thursday, and Mme. du Deffand was asked to join the guests, in order, as she herself said, to lessen the *ennui* of Mme. de Beauvau. Supper on Friday was once more partaken of at Prési-

dent Hénault's in the company of Mesdames Luxembourg, de Lauzun, the Idole and others. On Saturday the visitors who met at the same house were the Comtesse de Maillebois, sister to the Marquis de Paulmy, De Biron and De Broglie. Twelve or fourteen people were present at the usual supper gathering held at Mme. du Deffand's house on Sunday, and so on through the regular treadmill of gaiety. Even many years later when Selwyn was in Paris the last time before Mme. du Deffand's death, he supped with her on Friday, again on Saturday, and played at Loto which was then in vogue; Sunday he went with her to the Choiseuls, Monday to the Caramans, Tuesday to the Neckers, and arrangements were made for visits for ten or twelve days in advance. She was indefatigable, and Walpole is never tired of describing her enormous energy, which hardly failed her until she lay on her deathbed. "My dear old woman," he wrote, in August, 1769, "is in better health than when I left her, and her spirits so increased that I tell her she will go mad with age. When they ask her how old she is, she answers, 'J'ai soixante et mille ans'. She and I went to the Boulevard last night after supper and drove about there till two in the morning. We are going to sup in the country this evening, and are to go to-morrow night at eleven to the puppet-show." And again, on 7th September, "she makes songs, sings them, remembers all that ever were made; and having lived from the most agreeable to the most reasoning age, has all that was amiable in the last, all that is sensible in this, without the vanity of the former or the pedant impertinence of the latter. I have heard her dispute with all sorts of people, on

all sorts of subjects, and never knew her in the wrong. She humbles the learned, sets right their disciples, and finds conversation for everybody. Affectionate as Mme. de Sévigné, she has none of her prejudices, but a more universal taste ; and with the most delicate frame, her spirits hurry her through a life of fatigue that would kill me, if I was to continue here. If we return by one in the morning from suppers in the country, she proposes driving to the Boulevard or to the Foire St. Ovide, because it is too early to go to bed. I had great difficulty last night to persuade her, though she was not well, not to sit up till between two or three for the comet ; for which purpose she had appointed an astronomer to bring his telescopes to the Président Hénault's, as she thought it would amuse me. In short, her goodness to me is so excessive that I feel unashamed at producing my withered person in a round of diversions which I have quitted at home."

The moment of Walpole's arrival in Paris was usually the signal for an extra outburst of entertainments, and Mme. Simonetti, proprietress of the Hôtel Garni du Parc Royal, Rue de Colombier, where Walpole usually stayed in Paris, was instructed by Mme. du Deffand to send immediate word of his presence so that she knew at what moment to expect him in the midst of her guests. At his last visit in 1775, she was even too eager to wait for this, and according to his account in a letter to the Countess of Ailesbury, written on 20th August, she went to him the instant of his arrival and pleaded her blindness as an excuse for staying with him whilst he performed his toilet after his trying journey. "I sat with her till half an hour after two

in the morning," he wrote, "and had a letter from her before my eyes were open again. In short, her soul is immortal, and forces her body to bear it company."

Walpole mentions by name several of the guests who frequented her *salon* at this date. He took his departure from her house one morning leaving the Duc de Choiseul, the Duchesse de Grammont, the Prince and Princesse de Beauvau, the Princesse de Poix, the Maréchale de Luxembourg, the Duchesse de Lauzun, the Ducs de Gontaut (Governor of Languedoc), de Chabot and Caraccioli round her *chaise longue*. These friends remained members of the *salon* to the last. In September of the same year Walpole wrote to Conway: "Mme. du Deffand, who, you know, never loves her friends by halves . . . has made engagements for me till Monday se'nnight; in which are included I don't know how many journeys into the country; and as nobody ever leaves her without her engaging them for another time, all these parties will be so many polypuses, that will shoot out into new ones every way. Mme. de Jonsac, a great friend of mine, arrived the day before yesterday, and Mme. du Deffand has pinned her down to meeting me at her house four times before next Tuesday, all parentheses, that are not to interfere with our other suppers; and from those suppers I never get to bed before two or three o'clock. In short, I need have the activity of a squirrel and the strength of a Hercules to go through my labours—not to count how many *démêlés* I have had to *raccomode*, and how many *mémoires* to present against Tonton, who grows the greater favourite the more people he devours."

Tonton, Mme. du Deffand's dog, after her death was sent to Strawberry Hill, and ended his existence in Walpole's charge. He had, at the time of Walpole's letter, disgraced himself by flying in Lady Barrymore's face and biting her finger. Mme. du Deffand, who thought the dog had not been sufficiently punished, told the story of a lady whose dog had bitten a portion of flesh out of a gentleman's leg, and the owner, in great trouble as far as her pet was concerned, declared, "Won't it make my poor dog sick?"

This is one of the last pictures of the gay company at the Convent of St. Joseph from the pen of Walpole, although there was but little change in Mme. du Deffand's mode of life during the three or four years succeeding his final visit. As late as March, 1779, she describes a supper at which a number of guests were present, among them Mme. de Luxembourg, Mme. de Lauzun, the Duchesse de Boufflers, the Comtesse de Boufflers, M. and Mme. de Broglie, M. and Mme. de Beauvau, Mme. de Cambis, Mmes. de Mirepoix, de Boisgelin, d'Ossonville (daughter to the Comte de Guerchy), de Vieuville, de Barbantane, and four or five diplomatists and bishops; but in the following year Mme. du Deffand was growing very feeble and there is little talk of entertainments. One of the last of her evening receptions took place in July, when *beaucoup de monde* was present and La Harpe read his translation of the Sophoclean tragedy. In August of the same year the letters cease. She could dictate no longer. The end, which happened in September, was told by Wiart, to whom almost her last words were addressed, "Vous m'aimez donc?" when to

her surprise she became aware that her faithful secretary was weeping by her bedside. To Walpole she bequeathed her letters, her documents and her dog, as well as an assurance of the very tender affection she had borne him; but from him she had received no reply to the unspoken question ceaselessly in her mind, ever ready on her lips, and, although she was by no means incapable of loving, she was incapable of believing herself to be loved. It has been said of her that she possessed all the gifts but one—the power of turning them to the best advantage; it is certain that she had all but one of the qualities necessary for loving and being loved—and that was the power to fasten both attributes upon a single individual and achieve reciprocity. There was a great deal of human perverseness about her affections and her actions, and the natural and obvious almost always passed her by; yet in this characteristic want of adaptability a fund of interest lies hidden.

VII. MADEMOISELLE DE LESPINASSE

THE SALON OF PHILOSOPHY

THE attempt made by Mlle. de Lespinasse to raise altar against altar had been brought to nought. By this figure of speech Mme. de la Ferté-Imbault, daughter of Mme. Geoffrin, designated the perfidy practised by Julie when she established a miniature *salon*, an "early reception," on the very threshold of the drawing-room over which Mme. du Deffand, her patroness, herself presided. Nothing remained for the delinquent but to make a melodramatic exit from the Convent of Saint-Joseph and, somewhat ostentatiously, it must be confessed, to open a rival "shop of bright wits," with barely a day's delay, at the corner of the Rue de Belle-Chasse, not a hundred yards away from Mme. du Deffand's apartments. She rented the second and third storeys of a house opposite the Convent de Belle-Chasse at 950 livres per year, with porter's wage additional, a not inconsiderable sum in proportion to her comparatively meagre resources. But her friends came nobly to her aid and influenced others on her behalf, so that she found herself provided with furniture, ornaments, and a little income amounting to nearly £400 a year, which made it possible to establish herself in some kind of comfort. A tiny hall led to her drawing-room which was furnished in white and crimson and crowded with soft, upholstered velvet seats, especially adapted and placed with a view to

comfort, ease and sociability. Busts of D'Alembert and Voltaire adorned the mantelpiece, engravings of Turgot and others the walls. Her bedroom was on the same floor and was likewise furnished with crimson hangings. The rooms above were those which D'Alembert was presently to occupy, when mutual sick-nursing had established between them a life-long bond which gave rise to much comment regarding its exact nature. Together they were to share the honours of a *salon*, Julie being the brilliant centre of the social circle, whilst D'Alembert was president, guide and philosopher; a part that was played by Fontenelle for Mme. Geoffrin, by Grimm for Mme. d'Epinay, by Diderot for the Baron d'Holbach, but by none more effectively than by D'Alembert for Julie de Lespinasse.

Jean Larond d'Alembert, author of the Preface of the *Encyclopædia*, member and from 1772 Perpetual Secretary of the French Academy, with a wide intelligence and gentle nature, had much in his character that was complementary to the qualities possessed by Julie. Daring where he was timid, fervid where he was cold, she added passionate impulse to his exact logic, and if their different natures were endowed with elements which might have warred, circumstances had conspired to give them insoluble sympathy. "Both of us lack parents and family," wrote D'Alembert, "and having suffered abandonment, misfortune and unhappiness from our birth, nature seemed to have sent us into the world to find each other out, to be to each other all that each has missed, to stand together like two willows, bent by the storm but not uprooted, because in their weakness they have intertwined their branches."

The sad mystery of Julie's birth has already been outlined, that of D'Alembert, although less tragic in its dishonour, was equally shameless. Son of the unscrupulous and corrupt Mme. de Tencin, he was abandoned when a few hours old on the steps of the Church of Saint-Jean Lerond, one winter evening in 1717, and taken by a pitiful *gendarme* to the home of a working woman who for a short time had charge of him. He was sought out by his father, the gallant General Destouches, and put to nurse with a poor glazier's wife, and he lived a secluded life in a dark attic of her house for more than forty years, with no interest beyond his life-work. It was no wonder that these two beings, both of them social derelicts, knitted a bond of friendship too strong to allow of separation. D'Alembert was faithful with an unswerving fidelity. He bore and forbore with Julie endlessly. Galiani said of him: "D'Alembert can be found nowhere else, here (meaning in her *salon*) he is always to be seen; elsewhere never". Together they had entered Mme. Geoffrin's *salon* in the Rue St. Honoré, at first paying daily visits, later even twice a day. Julie was privileged, for she was the only woman Mme. Geoffrin invited to her Wednesday dinners. Together they remained in the Rue de Belle-Chasse, and in July, 1771, D'Alembert dedicated his portrait to her thus: "Time and custom stale all things, but they are powerless to touch my affection for you, an affection which you inspired seventeen years ago". At her death in May, 1776, he was utterly crushed and broken, and to the knowledge of his loss was added the burden of the discovery that her love had been given elsewhere though her friendship had remained his to the end.

The soul and the charm of her circle was Julie, possessed though she was of little personal beauty, but of enormous personal magnetism which drew from each and all the very best they had to give. Grimm solved the secret of her social success. "She could bring into harmony persons of the most dissimilar intelligence," he said, "often indeed those who were very antitheses to each other, without seeming to exert herself in the least. A single adroit word from her gave new life to conversation, sustained it or turned it as she pleased. No subject seemed without interest for her, and there was none in which she could not interest others. . . . Her genius seemed omnipresent, and one might imagine that some invisible charm was constantly luring each man's interest." Guibert declared, "Her talk was never above or beneath a man. She seemed to possess a key to all characters, the measure and exact quality of all spirits." Marmontel's opinion coincided with these. "Having mentioned the Graces," he wrote in his *Memoirs*, "I must speak of one who possessed all their gifts in thought and expression and was the only lady admitted by Mme. Geoffrin to her literary dinner; this was Mlle. Lespinasse, the fair friend of D'Alembert. In her was a surprising union of propriety, of judgment, of prudence, with the liveliest fancy, the most ardent soul, the most inflammable imagination which has existed since the days of Sappho. The fire which circulated through her veins, and which rendered her mind so active, so brilliant, so charming, consumed her prematurely. Whether listening or speaking (and no one spoke better) she was the object of our constant attention; with no coquetry, she inspired us with an innocent

desire of pleasing her; with no prudery, she let us see how far we might carry the freedom of conversation without transgressing the bounds of propriety. . . . With the exception of some friends of D'Alembert, as the Chevalier de Chastellux, the Abbé Morellet, Saint-Lambert and myself, the circle was composed of persons who had no connection together. She had collected them out of a variety of different societies, but had suited them so well together that when they met they appeared to be in harmony, like the strings of an instrument tuned by a skilful hand. Pursuing the comparison, I may say that she played on this instrument with an art which bordered on genius; she seemed to know the sound that would be yielded by the string she was about to touch; that is to say, our minds and characters were so fully known to her that a word was sufficient to bring them into action. Nowhere was conversation more lively, more brilliant, or under better regulation."

Julie received her friends between five in the afternoon and nine or ten o'clock at night. It was rarely indeed that these evening gatherings were missed, and if Julie wished to go to the theatre or had to pay a visit in the country; if, in short, by any extraordinary chance, she was not to be at home, "all Paris was made aware of her absence". She was not expected to give dinners like Mme. Necker, or suppers like Mme. du Deffand. Intellectuality was the chief offering she made to her guests, and it sufficed. "Sister de Lespinasse wished to make it known," announced Grimm, "that her fortune will not permit her to offer either dinner or supper, but that she has nevertheless the desire to receive at her house the brothers who wish to come and see her." She was

MADEMOISELLE DE LESPINASSE

FROM A DRAWING AT CHANTILLY

fortunate, indeed, for those who visited her were all intimate friends, and came solely because they loved her. There was a purely personal note in her *salon* which was not apparent to the same extent in any of the others. No one went to her house because it was the fashion, because they wished to meet celebrities there, or because they wished to be lionised, they went out of intellectual sympathy and personal affection. Never were the separate members of any circle more united, more of the same mind and understanding, less given to splitting up into cliques. They were all friends because they were drawn together by common feelings, a common aim, a common worship. This impulse was "the desire to please her and the need of loving her," said Guibert. "Alas! how many persons saw one another, sought one another, suited one another through her, who will never see or suit, or seek themselves again! The charm of her circle was so in *her*—that the persons who composed it were not the same as they were elsewhere. It was only in her presence that they had their full value."

Not only was Julie's *salon* the "laboratory" of the *Encyclopædia*, but it was the nursery of budding Academicians. After D'Alembert was appointed Perpetual Secretary of the Academy the election of candidates for every vacancy was a subject of discussion in the Rue de Belle-Chasse, and it is only natural that aspiring members should frequent the *salon* and that occasionally decisions as to their eligibility should emanate from there. Brilliant as were many of the men who formed her circle, picked from among the Encyclopædists, the Academicians, Ministers of State, Presidents, Church dignitaries and courtiers, their claim to attention lay, neverthe-

less, more in their personal relations to their young hostess and the place of honour which she accorded them in her heart than in the pride of their rank, genius and position; and from this standpoint of importance they appear most naturally grouped.

D'Alembert came first, for he never failed to respond to her smallest demand, and, secondly, she loved and trusted Condorcet. So nearly did the latter rival the former in her esteem and confidence that she wrote, classing them together: "I cannot better express my affection for M. de Condorcet and M. d'Alembert than by saying that they are almost a single person in my eyes, as essential to me as the air we breathe. They do not trouble my soul, but possess it."

Jean Antoine Nicholas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, was an aristocrat who devoted his life to the very people that were to rob him of it. In 1769 at the age of twenty-six he entered the Academy of Sciences, becoming four years later Perpetual Secretary of this institution. He was one of the finest original thinkers of his century, friend in the capacity of geometrician to D'Alembert, of philosopher to Voltaire, of reformer to Turgot, and withal idealist and dreamer, looking towards a golden age and working for it with his whole heart, his whole will, his chivalry, and his honesty. Voltaire described him as a man of the old nobility and the old virtue, Turgot praised him as "the highest intellectual and moral personality of his century". In 1774 the latter appointed him Inspector of Coinage, and together they grappled with the vexed question of Trade in Grain and other vital points of reform and legislation. Mme. Roland at a later date called Con-

dorcet "a wad of cotton saturated in fine liqueurs". In appearance he was not prepossessing, being negligent in dress, preoccupied and cold in manner. But beneath this unemotional exterior the man burnt with a steady flame of purpose and possessed an indomitable capacity for grasping facts, figures, character and possibilities. "Never, ah! never," said Julie of him, "has man lived so many lives, enjoyed such opportunities, and found such felicity." In D'Alembert's occasional absence he acted as her secretary and gladly fulfilled her most exacting behests. Yet, much as she loved both D'Alembert and the "bon et très bon et trop bon Condorcet," there was a third who became the recipient of her closest confidences. This was Suard, who was as openly warm in friendship as Condorcet appeared reticent and unbending. Suard's talk was delightful, versatile, sparkling, intensely human in its tendencies, and never pedantic. He was good-looking, tall, amiable and of a noble and thoughtful countenance. To him she felt able to unburden her heartfelt sadness when her ill-fated love of Mora and her inextinguishable passion for Guibert sapped her vitality and ruined her happiness. In his letters are brotherly counsel and sympathy, gentle chiding, genuine sincerity, the very gifts for which she longed, since it seemed her fate to give them forth in plenty to others whilst she gnawed at her own heart in vain hope of reciprocity.

One of her friends to whom she in turn played the *confidante* most successfully was Turgot, full as he was of philosophy and reform and for ever planning to benefit mankind. "A virtuous philosophic Turgot," Carlyle called him, "with a whole reformed France in his head." He was the "Minister of

Julie's *salon*," and thus occupied a unique position in it. Born in 1727 he was almost the same age as she. He followed Voltaire and Helvetius at the school of Louis-le-Grand, and was destined for the Church. At the Sorbonne he encountered Morellet and Loménie de Brienne as well as the Abbé de Cicé. On hearing that he wished to change his career, the latter said to him, "You will be a bishop, and then you can be a statesman at your leisure". In 1750 he left the Sorbonne and two years later was appointed Deputy-Counsellor of the Procurator-General and the following year Master of Requests. When young he mixed in the more intellectual social life of Paris and became the friend of Montesquieu, D'Alembert, Galiani and Helvetius. At the age of thirty-four he went to Limoges, and there the most vigorous years of his life were occupied in working for the people.

Turgot's friend Galiani was the man who made Paris laugh at first and later ponder over his writing entitled, *Dialogues sur le Commerce des Blés*, which appeared in 1770. Turgot wrote to Julie concerning this work, "L'Abbé Galiani, commencing with Geneva in dealing with the question of the free trade in grain, resembles one who writing a book on 'How Men Set to Work to Obtain a Means of Livelihood,' makes his first chapter deal with humpbacks; or like a geometrician who treating of the properties of triangles, begins to discourse of white triangles as the most simple in order to follow it up with blue triangles and then red triangles," etc. Voltaire, however, expressed the opinion that the little Abbé was as much like his *Dialogues* as two jets of fire are like each other. "How do you say I do not know Gali-

ani?" he asked of Mme. d'Epinay, "I have read him, therefore I have seen him." Julie enjoyed the little man's wit and geniality and they were great friends. He was nowhere more at ease than in her crimson *salon*. In his person he was, according to Marmontel, "the prettiest little harlequin that Italy ever produced; but on the shoulders of this harlequin was the head of a Machiavelli". After Galiani was recalled to Naples in 1769 and left Paris, to the unending chagrin of a number of its hostesses, he used frequently to recall the days he had spent in Julie's company, and make constant inquiries concerning her and her pets. "What is Mlle. de Lespinasse doing?" he wrote. "How is her dog, and the parrot? Does it still swear as much as ever? She will understand how well I remember all that concerns her," and so forth and so forth.

Galiani was a compatriot of Caraccioli, the Neapolitan Ambassador of whom it was said, "He had the wit of four men, gesticulated for eight and made the noise of twenty". "You will not find a more complete personality," wrote Julie of him, "by which I mean that the ambassador unites in his person all sorts of qualities, and all good in their kind . . . he is a facile talker, and so amiable and kind that there is no need to inquire whether he has sensibility." Before he had established his friendship with Julie, Caraccioli had been one of Mme. du Deffand's pet *protégés*. So soon, however, as she discovered that "his venerations are D'Alembert and the Lespinasse," she ceased to take any further interest in him and he lapsed entirely to the side of these joint enemies. The Chevalier d'Aydie was another of those whom Julie had met in Mme. du Deffand's *salon* and who

had ceded in favour of her superior attractions, as well as the Marquis d'Ussé, grandson of a Vauban and connected with the Vichy family, who was so erratic in his speech and preoccupied in thought that Président Hénault said of him, "his letters are as full of erasures as his talk is of parentheses". As for Hénault, it is difficult to believe that, after a lifelong service to Mme. du Deffand, he fell so complete a victim to the charms of her young rival that, as asserted by La Harpe, he laid his hand and fortune at her feet at the age of seventy, when he was deaf, fat, rubicund and no longer in the least irresistible. At all events the little episode, if it took place, did not hinder him from enjoying Julie's society too well to forego any opportunities of frequenting her *salon.*

Chastellux and Marmontel were also among those of her early friends who had countenanced the little receptions held by Julie in the Convent Saint-Joseph. With the latter she kept a sustained and steady friendship, and he made public in his *Memoirs* his high opinion of her qualities. He read some of his works at her receptions. "M. de Marmontel," she wrote to Guibert on Friday, 14th October, 1774, "proposed to me to come last Wednesday and read me his new comic opera. He came; there were some twelve persons present. Behold us in a circle surrounding him, and listening to the *Vieux Garcon*—that was the name of the piece." "Mon ami, you may say what you please," she continued in the same letter, referring to Chastellux, "but I do not like conversation unless it is you or the Chevalier de Chastellux who makes it. Apropos he is much pleased with me. I have stirred up his friends, and things are so well arranged that all we need to get

him received into the Academy is the death of one of the forty. It is a proper thing, no doubt, but it was not done without difficulty ; the interest, the pleasure, the desire he put into this triumph spurred me on. *Mon Dieu !* Fontenelle was right : there are rattles for all ages ; there is nought but sorrow too old for them, nought but passion too reasonable." Chastellux was forty years of age when he received the seat in question, obtained undoubtedly through her influence. Much as she admired his energy and enthusiasm, she found him wanting at times in that quality of sensibility for which she looked in every one dear to her. Their tastes did not invariably agree, and whilst she credited him with the benefit of his virtues there were times when he irritated her almost beyond endurance. In one of these and in flat contradiction of her remarks to Guibert already quoted, she wrote : " For three-quarters of the whole time I cannot understand the Chevalier. He is so satisfied with what he has done, knows so well what he will do, and is so enamoured with reason ! In a word, he is so perfect at all points that I have a hundred times felt myself utterly mistaken when I have been speaking or writing to him." The author of *La Felicité Publique* was a friend of Mme. Necker's, but she, too, had sometimes a difficulty in comprehending him. " The wit and ideas of M. de Chastellux," she said, " are like dim images which appear as though to one's eyes at the mention of any given name—a tree, a mountain, or campanile." Yet in spite of misunderstandings, it was of Chastellux that Julie declared : " I shall be glad to see him—I have loved him for eight years ".

Nor was Diderot among her favourites, for the

demands he made upon her were too imperative. "He forces the attention," she wrote of him, "and that is precisely what I cannot and will not give consecutively to any one." But in spite of the want of mutual sympathy between them, Diderot was too much bound up with the interests of the Encyclopædists not to appear in the crimson *salon*. It was he who noticed that the Comte de Crillon had fallen *sous le charme*, and was indeed devoted to Julie. When she was ill and grief-stricken the latter continued to visit her. "I told him," she wrote to Guibert, "he would have to breathe malarious air, for in the intoxication of felicity in which he is living it could only be a work of mercy in him to come and see me, and that I should be to him like those monuments that some philosophers preserve to make them remember to be good and just. 'You will come and see me,' I said, 'and when you go away you will say to yourself, "Trouble does exist on earth after all," your heart will be touched by my sorrows, and mine will have enjoyed your felicity.'"

Around these outstanding figures a number of others were grouped, and Julie's letters to Guibert bristle with their names. Of Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, she wrote: "He has character, many ideas, great activity, and a facility, an amenity which smooths away all difficulties". M. de Brienne was the nephew of Mme. du Deffand, and he strenuously endeavoured to keep in touch with both her and Mlle. de Lespinasse. Julie compared Turgot to Lycurgus, Brienne to the Cardinal de Richelieu. A little knot of diplomats included the Comte de Creutz, the Baron de Gleichen and Baron de Koch; of the two latter she remarked that

they stayed too late in the evenings to please her. M. d'Aranda, Ambassador from Spain when M. de Fuentés, father of Mora, was recalled, interested her since he was the father of Mora's child-wife; a similar sentimental interest attached to Mora's brother, M. le Prince de Pignatelli. M. d'Aguesseau, friend of Guibert and sometimes his messenger, won her sympathy through the air of trouble he invariably carried on his countenance; the Comte de Broglie was to her "a witty man"; M. de Vaines, head clerk of the Treasury in the place of M. Leclerc, presumed sufficiently on her confidence to say to her, "Make M. de Guibert return"; M. de Chamfort, who was "a very well-satisfied young man," did "his best to be modest". He was "possessed of four friends who loved him, namely, Mesdames de Grammont, de Rancé, d'Amblimont and the Comtesse de Choiseul". The Abbé de Condillac, whose writings she greatly appreciated, Mably, La Harpe, Thomas, friend of Mme. Necker; Chabanon, poet and musician, of a nervous and passionate temperament akin to her own; the Vicomte de Castellane who introduced Malouet to her, then known for his brilliant administration in the colonies, and later a member of the Constituent Assembly; the Abbé de Boismont, the Archbishop of Aix, M. de Laborde, Marquis de Meréville, one of the richest financiers of the day, destined for the guillotine; the Comte de Schomberg, friend of D'Alembert and devoted admirer of Voltaire; Jean Pierre de Damas, Comte d'Anlezy, connected with the D'Albon family and married to a niece of the Duchesse de Châtillon; Saurin and Duclos, author of the *Life of Louis XI.*, who, as Walpole wrote to Montagu, "dresses like a Dissenting minister, which

I suppose is the livery of a *bel esprit*, and is much more impetuous than agreeable"; these and many others had an assured place in her circle.

Literary readings frequently took place in most of the *salons* of the period, and in this respect Julie's was no exception to the general rule. La Harpe read his *Barnevelt*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre the *Voyage à l'Ile de France*, Roucher declaimed his *Mois* there in 1775, although this work was not published until four years later. Julie was intensely touched by the poet's sad story. She declared that since he had loved devotedly, it was passion which rendered him sublime. Roucher's life ended on the guillotine, and at his last moment he wrote touching verses to the wife he loved with his whole heart and for whom he had made a valiant struggle against ill-fortune. "But my heart melts with sadness," was Julie's cry, "when I think that that rare man, that wonder of nature, knows poverty and suffers from it for himself and others. Ah! such excess of poverty blights love; it needs a miracle to preserve the force and energy that he puts into his poems; his soul is of fire, and in no direction does he seem to be depressed by misfortune. I know not if it is weakness, but I have just melted into tears at feeling myself powerless to succour that man." It is a characteristic echo of her own agony, her own need of control.

Incidentally Mme. du Deffand describes one of these literary assemblies held by Julie in a letter to Mme. de Choiseul. "Our Ambassador," she wrote in November, 1773, referring to Caraccioli, "had supper with his divinity [Mme. de Beauvau] at my house yesterday. He spent the earlier part of the evening with Mlle. de Lespinasse. He was

delighted by the fine works he heard read there. An *éloge* (*d'un nommé Fontaine*) by M. de Condorcet. *Translations of Theocritus* by M. de Chabanon; stories, fables, I know not what else; everything was finer than anything else that had ever been written."

Yet the crimson *salon* was at its best during a simple discussion and not at literary readings, for then its members could give full play to their individual intellectuality. Politics, religion, philosophy, art and music, anything of interest in short, received the attention of the company, and if the conversation chanced to flag, the hostess reanimated it by a single phrase thrown in with judgment, or if the subject became threadbare she turned it to a new idea and it flowed on more brilliant than before. She was never at a loss for a note, and never struck a wrong one on the conversational instrument, but she found it easier to play harmoniously when her circle was composed of men rather than women, although the latter, if they but possessed some pretensions to wit, were considered qualified to become her associates. Yet, however vague, however undefined, however unspoken, some rivalry existed between them and their hostess, and it is obvious that apart from one or two of her old friends who had helped to establish her *salon*, the others were only there on sufferance. To the former class belonged Mme. Geoffrin and the Maréchale de Luxembourg, to the latter Mme. de Laborde, Mme. Suard, the Marquise de Saint-Charmans and her daughter Mme. de Meulan, the Duchesse d'Anville who was closely in touch with the Encyclopædists and was called "la sœur du pot des philosophes," Mme. d'Héri-

court, a friend of D'Alembert, and the Duchesse de Châtillon, daughter of the Duchesse de la Vallière. This lady took a violent fancy to Mlle. de Lespinasse and at first the latter by no means reciprocated her feelings. "She exacts so little and gives so much," she declared half plaintively. But Mme. de Châtillon persevered in her new friendship. "I do not see her any longer," wrote Mme. du Deffand, "since the *grande liaison* which she has with the Lespinasse." And in the end Julie was won over completely. She wote to Guibert: "I begin to think that the first of all qualities required to make others love us is to be loving. No, you cannot possibly imagine all the ways and means by which she endeavours to reach my heart. My friend, if only you loved me as she does—No, I would not have it so; heaven preserve me from knowing such happiness twice."

One of the few women who was able to keep up a connection with Mme. du Deffand's *salon* as well as Julie's was the Comtesse de Boufflers, *l'Idole du Temple*. Unfortunately for her, however, Mme. du Deffand never became quite reconciled to her half-allegiance, and Mlle. de Lespinasse did not thoroughly appreciate her adherence to herself, and thus the Comtesse de Boufflers ended by falling between two stools. There was something lacking in her character, some want of lovableness which evoked bitter comments from even her best friends. Horace Walpole, although he had set a eulogistic verse for her on his printing press when she went to visit him at Strawberry Hill, was inclined, as we have already seen, to be sarcastic in expressing his true opinion. The verse ran :—

TO MADAME DE BOUFFLERS

The graceful fair, who loves to know,
Nor dreads the North's inclement snow,
Who bids her polished accent wear
The British diction's harsher air,
Shall read her praise in every clime
Where types can speak or poets rhyme.

Julie's friendship for her varied. "She is very agreeable," we find her saying; "she came to dine with Mme. Geoffrin on Wednesday and was charming; she did not say a word that was not a paradox. She was attacked, and defended herself so wittily that her fallacies were almost as good as truth". But another time she wrote of her: "I wonder how it happens that all her graces and attractions still leave her so ineffective a figure. She really does not make much impression, and I think I know why. Everything has its conventional truth. There is the truth of a picture, of a play, of a sentiment, and of conversation. Mme. de Boufflers reaches this truth in nothing, and this explains how she passes through life without really touching or interesting even those people whom she had been the most anxious to please." Some note of personal animus or distrust seems to have been struck here, and the explanation of it may be found in the possibility that Mme. de Boufflers cast audacious glances in the direction of Guibert which did a certain execution. That Julie was jealous is to be inferred from a letter to Guibert in which she said: "Abbé Morellet told me a few days ago in the innocence of his heart that you were in love with the young Comtesse de Boufflers". Another of those who poached upon Julie's preserves in this quarter, and thereby incurred

her displeasure, was Mme. de Marchais, of whom Horace Walpole said, "she is charming; eloquence and attention itself". In truth she was alert, vivacious, quick-witted and sincere. Her *salon* was a rendezvous for the economists. Marmontel, who called her the "young fairy," said that her circle "embraced all the most estimable persons of the day, and in the domain of culture all that is highest and most distinguished". Mme. de Marchais quarrelled with the Neckers, an affair in which Caraccioli and D'Angiviller (the latter was her lover and became her husband) were both of them involved. Mme. du Deffand dragged Julie's name into her version of the quarrel, which aroused her annoyance and D'Alembert's disgust.

Of the illustrious Englishmen visiting Paris at this period only two of importance frequented Mlle. de Lespinasse's *salon*. Walpole of course never entered its doors. Lord Shelburne was one of those who enjoyed a genuine friendship with Julie, and Hume was the other. Of both of them she had only good to speak, and her praise of the former is unstinted. "He is simple, natural," she wrote, "he has soul and strength; he likes and is attracted by that only which resembles himself, at least in being natural . . . he has intellect, ardour, elevation of soul. He reminds me a little of the two men in the world whom I have loved and for whom I would live or die." This is unstinted praise, born of the fact that he had wit, political standing, literary tastes, and that he invited her to visit him in England in order to recoup her failing health, a civility which deeply touched her. Julie had a great veneration for the English Constitution and English customs. "I

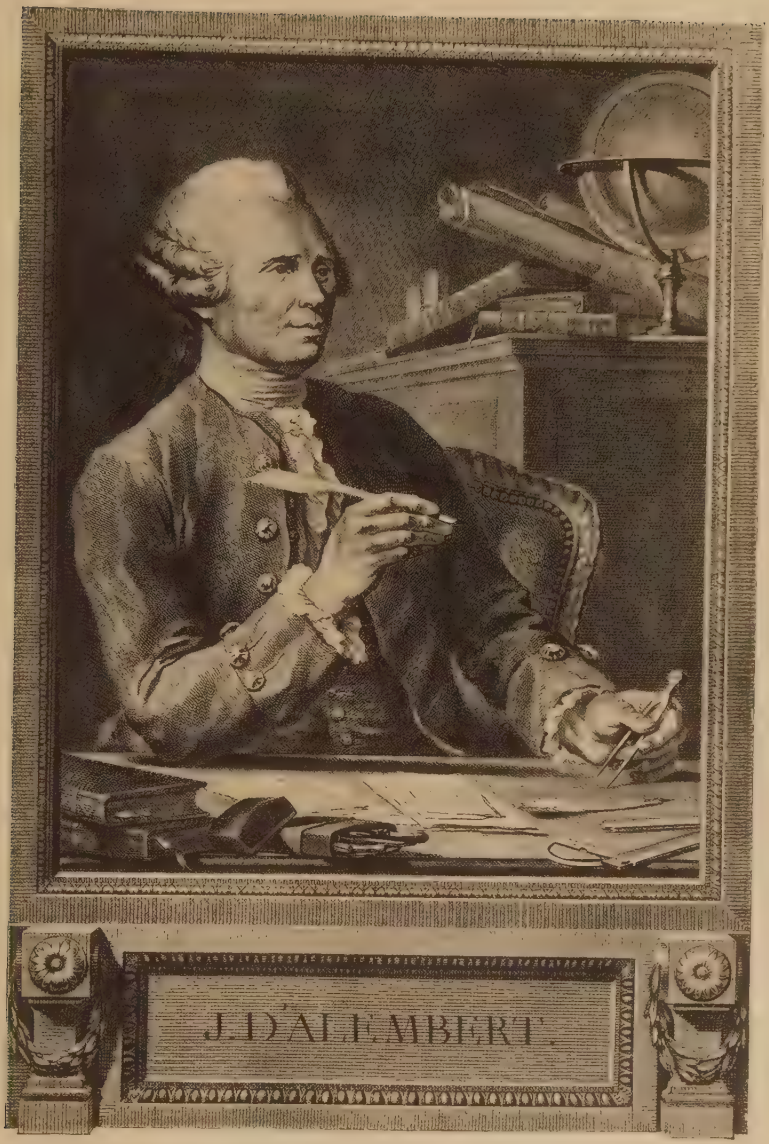
should rather be the last member in the Chamber of Commons," she declared, "than King of Prussia; it is only the glory of Voltaire which consoles me for not having been born English. But one more word concerning Milord Shelburne. Do you know how he rests brain and soul after the fatigues of government. By deeds of well-doing worthy of a sovereign, by forming public institutions for the education of all his tenants, and by entering into all the details of their instruction and welfare. That is the recreation of a man who is only thirty-four and whose soul is as sensitive as it is strong and courageous. What a difference between him and a Frenchman, one of our pretty Court gentlemen."

Julie first met Hume at Mme. du Deffand's and they immediately became good friends. In 1764 Hume wrote bluntly, "I went to see Mlle. Lespinasse, D'Alembert's mistress, who is really one of the most sensible women in Paris". After his return to England in 1766 they continued to correspond. The well-known quarrel between the historian and Rousseau caused Julie great agitation. "Good God, sir," she wrote to Hume, "what happened between Rousseau and you? What is the terrible crime which he has committed against you?" And then she begged for an account of the matter, "in your own interest so that I may have the means of defending you against the fanatical Rousseauites here".

The quarrel grew acute and caused so much scandal in Parisian circles that at last a conclave was called in Julie's *salon* by Hume's special request, at which Turgot, Morellet, Saurin, Duclos, Marmontel and of course D'Alembert were present. It was

unanimously resolved at this meeting that the "whole story be made public at once". D'Alembert wrote to Hume that everything was to be set out "simply and directly, but without temper or the least acrimony," and at the close of the epistle Julie dictated a few lines herself in which she assured Hume of her undiminished friendship and begged him to state his case at once in print. The result was a pamphlet containing Hume's views translated by Suard and issued jointly by D'Alembert and Mlle. de Lespinasse. If peace was expected to ensue the mission failed. Walpole, through his own indiscretion, became mixed up with the affair and personal recriminations between him and D'Alembert followed. The latter appealed to Voltaire and the names of both Mme. du Deffand and Mlle. de Lespinasse were dragged into the discussion. Paris ridiculed the whole thing, and Voltaire, highly entertained, wrote gaily: "Is not this something nearly as ridiculous as Jean Jacques himself? I find I am as deep in it as a man eating a supper to which he was not bidden." At the last Hume came through the business with flying colours and Julie congratulated him on his tact. "I have seen the letter which you sent to M. Turgot on behalf of that unfortunate Rousseau," she wrote. "I recognised your true and humane goodness in its lines, and this last proof of those qualities surpasses all that has gone before." The bond of friendship between them thus received its seal.

But if Julie was great in friendship, she was still more renowned for love. According to Grimm there were five or six such "affairs of the heart"; but if this were the case, little is known of most of



D'ALEMBERT

FROM AN ENGRAVING IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

them except that she was supposed to have conceived a passion, whilst still in Mme. du Deffand's drawing-room, for one of the De Taafe brothers, a man of whom little is recorded save that he was of a good old Irish family, was a man of letters and interested in philosophy and wit. For some reason the affair came to nothing, but it brought to light the fact that Mlle. de Lespinasse, when crossed in love, became emotional and passionate to a dangerous degree, and it in some measure foreshadowed the complications which arose later when her feelings were swayed by the two men whose influence over her life caused its tragedy, Mora and Guibert.

The Marquis de Mora, born at Saragosa on 19th April, 1744, belonged to a branch of the Pignatelli family, one of the oldest and most famous in Spain. His father the Comte de Fuentés and brother already mentioned, frequented Julie's *salon* when in Paris. At the age of twelve Mora went through the marriage ceremony with a girl a year younger than himself. Four years later, in 1760, the actual union took place, and four years later again the Marquise died leaving a baby son. At the age of twenty, Mora, widower and father, hastened to Paris to join the Comte de Fuentés at the Spanish embassy. He was welcomed in all the best society, for his interest was centred in literary gatherings, philosophical debates and all discussion of questions of the day. In December, 1766, he first met Julie de Lespinasse and created a sufficiently deep impression upon her to induce her to write to D'Holbach: "I want to tell you about something which fills my thoughts just now—a new acquaintance who fills my mind, and I would add my heart, only that you deny me that

organ". Not content with this she added an estimate of his character. "His face, full of kindly sympathy, imposes confidence and friendship. His character is gentle and attractive without being weak. He is an enthusiast, yet self-contained, well-balanced, yet full of qualities and intuition. . . . One can always see to the bottom of his soul, and he always thinks highly enough of those he loves, or loves them well enough, to consider that any artificiality would be as much beneath them as it would be beneath himself. In a word, I find in this man my idea of perfection."

Only a fortnight after this first meeting, Mora, impelled by a family quarrel, left Paris for Madrid. He returned to his native country with the reputation of having been a "furious success in Encyclopædist *salons*". A flirtation with the widowed Duchesse de Huescar, who was not thought sufficiently eligible for him by the Fuentés family, caused his relatives to urge him to leave Madrid. Military duties made this impossible, however, but the death of his little son at the age of three loosened the stern discipline enforced by the authorities, and Mora hastened back to the French capital, his health already suffering from the effect of his misfortunes.

If Julie had shown inclination towards Mora at the opening of their acquaintance it was now his turn to reciprocate. The Duchesse de Huescar was speedily forgotten—later she became his stepmother—and the entire force of his ardent, highly sensitive nature poured itself forth in a passionate fever of love for Julie. In her was the need of being loved, the joy of self-surrender, of sacrifice, the belief that love was a religion. The meeting of two such tem-

peraments could have but one result. During the winter and spring of 1768 these two gave themselves up to the happiness of their mutual affection, a happiness which was short-lived. Mora's leave expired in May, and after paying a visit to Voltaire at Ferney he returned to Madrid and immediately commenced a siege at the War Office in the hope of obtaining further leave. This was refused, but his sister's marriage with his friend the Duc de Villa Hermosa presently afforded him the opportunity of returning to the French capital. The happiness of the earlier meeting was renewed. "I was loved," cried Julie, "in a way beyond reach of imagination. All passions whereof I have read were feeble and cold in comparison with the love of Monsieur de Mora. It filled his whole life. You can judge, therefore, if it filled mine." At the prospect of such a union for the scion of their house, the Fuentés family rose up in arms and parental and military authority were once more exerted to remove Mora from a scene of danger. In 1770 at the age of twenty-six he was appointed General of Brigade, but almost immediately sent in his papers and left the service. The ostensible reason he gave for this act was his ill-health, the real reason was undoubtedly the magnetic influence which drew him to the French capital. Unfortunately the ostensible became the real, and before he could leave Madrid in January, 1771, both lungs failed and he lay sad and prostrated. The remainder of the winter was passed at Valencia, in suffering and correspondence, while Julie in Paris received his letters and in consequence of her anxiety fell ill with fever and convulsions. At intervals she carried on her *salon* as gaily as before, concealing from her guests the anguish

which consumed her, and of which the effects fell upon the unsuspecting D'Alembert to whom her grief freely communicated itself although he did not understand its cause. Whilst D'Alembert journeyed to Italy and Ferney to regain his lost spirits, Mora, casting prudence to the winds, returned to Paris and once more entered the gay society life of the city. When his health was completely broken, his doctor ordered him to Bagnères, his father to Madrid, for there he wished him to remain with his dying mother. Forced by these considerations Mora left Paris on 7th August, 1772, never to return. Yet a worse misfortune than his departure was to befall the woman who had given him her love. She encountered at the house of one Watelet, a friend both to her and D'Alembert, the man whose personality was to efface in her even the strongest ties of love and gratitude. This Comte de Guibert, a dashing young colonel, author of *A Comprehensive Study of Tactics*, polished man of the world, with an inexplicable power of pleasing women, whom as a sex he despised, was able alike to compel the love of such personalities as Julie de Lespinasse and Mme. de Stael. He was not particularly striking in appearance, he was not tall though he carried himself well, and he had thick hair, deep-set eyes, a heavy jaw, a large mouth and a wonderful gift of eloquence which entranced all who listened to his conversation. His voice was calculated to fascinate his hearers, for it was low, winning and seductive. Three days after their first meeting Julie wrote to Condorcet: "I have met Monsieur de Guibert, who pleases me extremely; every word that he utters shows depth of character and a strong and exalted nature. He is like no one

else;" and again soon afterwards: "Monsieur Guibert has been here. He continues to please me infinitely." The poison was instilled in her veins which drop by drop was to corrode her blood until she paid the penalty with life itself. Fate positively rushed upon her; there was no time to pause, none to reflect, the all-powerful stream of passion carried her unresisting, bore her onwards to a half-acknowledged shame, swamped her higher self and left her stranded and dying, not merely of a love starved for want of reciprocity, but tortured and maimed by the ghost of remorse for a dead love which rose between her and the new object of her affections and kept her soul from enjoying the repose for which she prayed.

The story of Mora's attempt to return to her from Spain, his last heart-rending journey which ended at Bordeaux, where he died on the 27th of May, 1775, spared from the knowledge that the woman he loved had given herself to another, the fact of her ever-increasing passion for Guibert which met with little response, the long-drawn cry of mingled love and pain in her letters to the man who held her, soul and body, in a ruthless bondage, are too well known to require more than one passage to emphasise them. "Regret for such a love would suffice to make the sorrow and the despair of a tender soul," she cried. "Ah! but I suffer more cruelly still from the remorse which weighs upon my soul; I see myself guilty, I feel myself unworthy of the happiness I once enjoyed; I failed a man, the most virtuous, the most tender of men; in a word, I failed my own self, I lost my own esteem; judge therefore if I ought to claim yours."

Mora was dead. She had been faithless to him

in life, she endeavoured vainly to be faithful in memory; Guibert appeared cold, cruel, with short intervals of a friendliness which but redoubled and quadrupled his hold upon her imagination. These things comprised the tragic history of a woman whose brilliant and intellectual social gifts could not fill her life, and in a tempest of remorse and despair her senses became numb and crushed. She grew absent-minded in the very midst of her friends, and only one thought had power over her. It is repeated again and again in her letters: "I have seen twenty people to-day and not one of them was able to distract me from the need I have of seeing you," "Persons were all around me, but I could not have been more alone in a desert," "Ah, how irksome it is to live in society when one has but one thought," and the thought is of the living and unresponsive, of the dead and faithful, and of the sum-total of her own grievous unworthiness. It had become a madness, a possession, and in her letters to Guibert she poured it forth. He remonstrated mildly towards the last, "Write to me, even if your letters must be full of Mora". But the end was coming. The blow of Guibert's projected marriage, the meeting with his *fiancée*, Mlle. de Courcelles, his departure as a happy bridegroom, were responsible for a fresh lapse into despair, gloom and disease. Then came a recurrence of friendship, letters, kindliness and interest, too late to stem the mortal sickness of her body, which left her exhausted, too spent to profit by Guibert's visits and D'Alembert's unpausing services. There was no time for respite, barely strength to prolong the struggle, nothing to hinder for another hour the closing of her *salon* in death.

VIII. MADAME DE STAEL

THE SALON OF POLITICS

"I HAVE wit, plenty of wit, a prodigious wit," said Mme. de Stael to her father's coachman at Coppet, "and if you are ever unfortunate enough to turn my father into a ditch I shall use all my wits to get you shut up in a dungeon for the rest of your life," and then, addressing her cousin, Mme. Necker de Saussure, to whom the accident of the overturned carriage had actually happened, she added apologetically, "What could I have threatened him with if not with my poor wit?" Wit, as she well knew, was her chief weapon and she wielded it successfully, realising its power and using it to gain her many-sided reputation as politician, philosopher, novelist, patriot, *intrigante*, metaphysician, in short all the fame which has attached to her as a woman of peculiar intellectual distinction. She was many-sided from the personal point of view also, being a devoted daughter, a passionate lover, a sincere friend and a pleasing hostess. Moreover, she possessed an ardent soul and a nature so untrammelled by conventions that it burst through chains of bondage and showed forth in naked grandeur. Apart from her achievements in the world of letters, of politics, of philosophy —achievements which have been exaggerated in importance—she held a position among the women of her day, not only exceptional, but unapproached by

any other in France. Wherever Mme. de Stael set foot, in Paris, Coppet, Weimar, Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, or London, she readily attracted a large circle of those whose ideas were in sympathy with her own, but she appeared at her best surrounded by a few intimates rather than in a crowd, for she had no taste for formalities or outward restraint; she enjoyed the impromptu, the natural and simple, and whilst she demanded freedom of action for herself, she expected others to take advantage of an equal liberty, preferring that her guests should feel as much at home in her house as in their own.

It is from this personal side, as a loving, high-spirited, clever woman, with all her faults of wilfulness and overbearing, that Mme. de Stael is most interesting; the great writer, the would-be reformer vanishes, she no longer meddles with the affairs of her country, but she is present as a master influence, guiding the intellectual pleasures of her gay company.

Her *salon*, owing to the disordered state of the country and her own restlessness and imprudence, was not held continuously enough to be regarded as a factor of importance in affairs of State. Napoleon likened it to a club, and whilst he discountenanced the gossip that was talked there, he never feared its influence. It was divided into four chief sections: from 1789 in Paris before the Revolution, from 1795 in Paris after the Revolution, from 1800 onwards at Coppet, during her exile, and from 1814 until her death in Paris after her exile was ended. She was the life of these assemblies; her brilliant capacity, her strong personality, gave them an exceptional vigour. In her early childhood she stepped into

the society which afforded her a whetstone for the sharpening of her talents.

Born on 22nd April, 1766, Anne Louise Germaine Necker at the age of ten was always present in her mother's *salon* seated on a wooden stool at Mme. Necker's feet, erect, attentive and very quiet. According to her biographer, Sorel, this was the only period of her life when she was silent, and it was not to last for long. The day was soon to come when she would speak, and speak so well that she commanded universal attention. The *salon*, with its atmosphere of progressive conservatism, was her training-school, and her teachers were the Encyclopædists D'Alembert and Diderot, La Harpe who petted her, as later he petted Mme. Récamier in her childhood, and Grimm, friend of Mme. d'Epinay, admirer of Mlle. de Lespinasse (many of her friends were also Mme. Necker's), originator of the *Correspondance Littéraire*, and a man whose rage, according to Rousseau's biassed opinion, like that of tigers, "became daily more fierce by the facility of satiating it". The Abbé Raynal, garrulous old bore, absurd in his little round wig, held Germaine's fingers in both his hands and begged her to write for him "un morceau" on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes; Marmontel composed verses to give her special pleasure, and Buffon, Suard, Thomas, her mother's platonic friend whom Voltaire nicknamed Galithomas, the Abbés Morellet and Galiani swelled the ranks of the early acquaintances she made in her mother's *salon*. The latter complained of his hostess's "cold demeanour of decency," and poured forth an unquenchable fire of logic across her dinner-table on Fridays, silencing many of her guests with his flow

of fine rhetoric. Also there were others. Gibbon, whom Germaine offered to marry about this time for her mother's sake and with a view to "keeping him in the family," Lord Stormont, "the handsome Englishman," British Ambassador at Versailles, Hume, M. Saint-Lambert, Dr. Tronchin, the fashionable physician who had dared to order open windows at Versailles, and was responsible for Mlle. Necker's sojourn in the country when her health suffered through overstudy, the Marquis de Pezay and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, author of *Paul et Virginie*. Such were the remarkable men who surrounded her as she sat childlike, yet precociously alert, holding a mimic court around her miniature wooden throne. "Every one in approaching Mme. Necker," wrote Mlle. Huber, who was the child's devoted friend and companion, "said a word to her daughter either in the shape of a compliment or a pleasantry. She answered all easily and with grace. People seemed pleased to attack her, to embarrass her, to excite her imagination which was already so brilliant." Mme. de Genlis wrote deprecatingly of Germaine's precocity and complained that she spent "the greater part of the day in the drawing-room surrounded by all the wits of the time," and that such an atmosphere could not be otherwise than unwholesome. In 1780 a change was made and Germaine was sent into the country to play in the open air. One of her earliest amusements had been to cut out paper kings and queens and compose puppet tragedies, but in the garden at Saint-Ouen she and Mlle. Huber themselves took part in the tragic scenes, a foreshadowing of the days that were coming when she would witness men and women act tragedy in

deadly earnest with kings and queens of flesh and blood, whilst she herself was earning the title bestowed upon her by Sainte-Beuve of "a daughter of the Revolution".

Mme. Necker lost interest in Germaine from the day when she was forced to forego the satisfaction of filling her young daughter's mind with book learning and educating her by pedantic rule and rote, as she had educated her pupils at her little school in Lausanne when, as Mlle. Curchod, she had been sole mistress there. Nor was her interest ever thoroughly revived save temporarily during the negotiations for her daughter's marriage. It was difficult to find the right husband for Mlle. Necker in spite of her fortune, and the arrangement finally agreed upon was wanting even in an appearance of romance; in fact the entire negotiations were blatantly commercial. The man she was to marry had to be a Protestant of aristocratic birth, in itself a rare combination in a Frenchman at that date, but Germaine did not wish to leave her native country. Attempts were made to unite her to Count Fersen or to William Pitt, both of which affairs came to nought, although the latter was perhaps not so sternly "married to his country" as at the time was suggested. But M. le Baron de Stael-Holstein, Swedish Ambassador in Paris, was more amenable to reason, and after seven persistent years of angling he managed to secure the dowry of 650,000 francs with a woman attached for whom he did not care in the least, bestowing upon her in exchange for this not inconsiderable sum the position of Ambassadress, Baronne and his wife. If he did not choose to give his heart, neither was he offered hers which was no longer her

own to command, being already in the possession of the Comte de Guibert, whom she had first met in 1781, and of whom she wrote, echoing the still more fiery words of Mlle. de Lespinasse, "his whole soul when he spoke to you seemed to be yours".

The marriage, long delayed, took place on 14th January, 1786, when Mlle. Necker was twenty and her husband thirty-seven. "I hope that M. de Stael will be happy, but I do not expect it," said Mme. de Boufflers who had helped to play the hand of the would-be bridegroom. She made this cheerful comment in a letter to Gustavus III., King of Sweden, and followed it up with: "His wife, it is true, has been brought up in honourable and virtuous principles, but she has no experience of the world and no knowledge of the *convenances* and is so spoiled and opinionated that it will be difficult to make her perceive her deficiencies. She is much too imperious and self-willed. I have never, in any position in society, seen such self-assurance in a woman of her age." A similar sentiment was expressed by Mme. d'Oberkirch in her *Memoirs*. "All the men found her ugly, awkward and above all artificial," she wrote of Mme. de Stael. "She did not know how to behave, and felt very much out of her element in the midst of the elegance of Versailles."

The marriage was only a fortnight old when the bride was presented at Court. She had little of the *grande dame* in her composition and it was some time before she won her way into the forefront of society. Only sheer force of character, brilliant wit and conversation, and the fact that her *salon* was on the right side and she was thus able to use her influence for her friends, made it possible for her to

MADAME DE STAEL.

AFTER THE PAINTING BY GÉRARD

gain the social victory. As the Revolution proceeded the removal of her rivals through emigration was also a factor in her favour. Because she was disappointed in her marriage and had prepared for disappointment, she threw herself with a double will into the whirlpool of society, with the intention of conquering all obstacles to her advancement. Though barely in her twenties, she established a firm hold over the animated groups of people who thronged to her *salon* at the Swedish Embassy in the Rue de Bac. Years later, when perforce she gazed continually on the calm but, to her, singularly wearisome face of Lake Leman, she sighed for the gutters of the Rue de Bac, that historic street where Chateaubriand was to live and die. But the early days there were brilliant and at first unclouded ; her *salon* already eclipsed that of her mother, and the Swedish Legation in Paris had never been more gay. The Baron de Stael was closely in touch with the Court and his connection with Necker helped him. In his wife he found a willing collaborator who sent long despatches concerning the social life of Paris to Gustavus III., full of court news, the dinners, the suppers, the balls that took place, which she described in a gossipy, chatty style, of personal value if of little political significance.

She had stepped into the world at a moment of tension, when great minds were about to awaken and were prepared if need be to sacrifice life for the regeneration of their country. The opportunity was hers of forming a circle of friends who met and wished to meet again day after day, in this very spirit of unrest and excitement. Among them were men like Montmorency, Alexandre and Charles de Lamoth,

Charles de Noailles, later Duc de Mouchy, the Marquis de Clermont-Tonnerre, Narbonne, Talleyrand, D'Argenson, Lally-Tollendal, Montesquieu and his brother, Barnave, Guadet, Vergniaud, Buzot, Mirabeau, and Cazalès, men who were orators, with the courage of lions, hearts of fire, and honour as unbending as the truest steel. During the *États Généraux* her *salon* was filled daily with a crowd who rallied round her in search of advice and information, and the excitement of those days entered into her very blood and heated it, if not to revolution point, at least to the extent of believing it a holy duty to succour the people at whatsoever cost.

Thus the two or three years which followed her marriage were full of significant unrest. Necker, who in 1781 had been dismissed from office and banished to within forty leagues of Paris, was recalled in 1788. He was again dismissed, but resumed office after the fall of the Bastille in August, 1789. Mme. de Stael had followed these ups and downs of his fortune closely, her affection for him was practically the mainspring of her existence, and it was a great blow to her when he finally resigned and retired to Coppet, the beautiful estate he had purchased a few years earlier close to Geneva. The old château was guarded by two great avenues of trees called by Mme. de Stael the "friends who watched over her destiny," and was to become in her hands, and through her renown, one of the intellectual centres of Europe. By the time of Necker's downfall she had commenced her literary career, following up several stories of minor importance with the *Letters on the Writings and Character of Rousseau* which appeared in 1788. At this date

she was drawn more and more into the social maelstrom which swirled the faster as the approaching cataclysm threatened to engulf it. Her parents were still in Paris, and, Mme. Necker's health failing about this time, Mme. l'Ambassadrice, as her daughter was called, was regarded as the centre of the invalid's *salon* in the Rue Bergère where she received as frequently as in the Rue de Bac. Many of the Neckers' friends were dead, the rest were on the point of scattering, but among the guests who remained faithful to earlier meetings were Marmontel, Grimm, Suard, Morellet, Saint-Lambert, Guibert, the Duchesse de Lauzun, Chastellux, Mme. d'Houdetot, *la belle laide*, and Bonstetten, both the latter having shown much affection for Germaine in her childhood in Paris and at St. Ouen. But the social life was changing, and interspersed among the friends who had been contemporary with her mother, were a number of new-comers, most of them gifted with political tastes and tendencies; among them chiefs of noble houses, tribunes of the people, and thinking scientific men. Much later Mme. de Stael remarked, "My house is a political hospital. One sees there the wounded of all parties." At this date it was more like a political college where undergraduates trained for the deadly struggle. In the early nineties Monnier the publicist was to be found in her *salon*, and Lafayette whom she admired for his chivalrous wit; Pétion who with Buzot was accused of being a traitor to his country, and who perished as a royalist; Thouret, friend of Barnave and of Chapelier, Abbé Sièyes, builder of the Consulate, hard-headed, clear-sighted, of whom Mirabeau said, "Je le tuerai par son propre silence," and who was

clever enough to appear to be the man of all parties; Guadet, friend of Gensonné, the former an orator, the latter a logician, Vergniaud, Lally-Tollendal, her right-hand man, Talleyrand her left-hand man, Crillon, Toulongeon, the Prince de Broglie, La Rochefoucauld and the *bourgeois* Malouet, Chenier the poet, Jaucourt, and the Abbé Damas, besides others already named. The intellectual activity of Paris was at its height amidst the prevailing fermentation. Mme. de Stael wrote years later of the social life, that "foreigners who have seen it only since the downfall of Napoleon cannot conceive of the attractions, the *éclat* of the society of Paris. It can be affirmed with truth that it has never been so brilliant nor so serious as during the first three or four years of the Revolution—from 1788 to the end of 1791." Talleyrand declared, "Who has not lived in these years does not know the joy of life," and Chateaubriand wrote of the same years, "I cannot depict society in 1789 and 1790 better than by comparing it with the architecture of the time of Louis XII. and Francis I., when the Greek orders began to be grafted upon the Gothic style, or rather by likening it to the collection of ruins and tombs of all ages heaped pell-mell, after the Terror, in the cloister of the Petits-Augustins: only the ruins of which I speak were alive and constantly changing. . . . All that was elegant and in good taste in aristocratic society met at the Hôtel de la Rochefoucauld, at the *soirées* of Mesdames de Poix, d'Hénin, de Simiane, de Vaudreuil, in the few *salons* that remained open of the upper magisterial circle. At M. Necker's, at M. le Comte de Montmoron's, at the houses of the different ministers gathered (in addition to Mme. de Stael, the Duchesse d'Aiguil-

lon, Mesdames de Beaumont and de Sérilly) all the new lights of France and all the liberties of the new manners."

"Quite the first *salon* of Paris at this time [1789] was that over which Mme. de Stael presided," wrote Gouverneur Morris. The American envoy, who was a friend of Washington's, met Mme. de Stael at the Neckers' and was asked to call on her. In his *Diary and Letters*, edited by A. C. Morris, there is frequent mention of her *salon*. "Her regular Tuesday evening supper, when not more than a dozen or fifteen covers were laid and her chosen friends were admitted into the little *salon*, the *chambre ardente*, was the great feature of the week. Here, the candles extinguished to heighten the effect, the Abbé Delille declaimed his 'Catacombs de Rome,' and here Clermont-Tonnerre submitted to the criticism of his friends his discourse before delivering it to the public. Near the chimney Necker stood, entertaining the Bishop of Autun [Talleyrand], who smiled but avoided talking. Here was to be found the Duchesse de Lauzun, of all women the most gentle and timid; and in the midst stood the hostess, in her favourite attitude, before the fire with her hands behind her back, a large, leonine woman, with few beauties and no grace of gesture. She nevertheless animated the *salon* by her masculine attitude and powerful conversation." As Morris entered this charmed circle he found M. de Narbonne, M. de Montmoron and his daughter, and Mme. de Coigny in "the upper regions of wits and graces," as he expressed it.

"I go to-day," he wrote on 9th November, 1789, "to dine at M. de Necker's and place myself next

to Mme. de Stael, and as our conversation grows animated she desires me to speak English which her husband does not understand. Afterwards in looking round the table, I observe in him much emotion. I tell her that he loves her distractedly which she says she knows, and that it renders her miserable. Condole with her on her widowhood, the Chevalier de Narbonne being absent in Franche Comté."

The following year Morris described another visit to the Rue de Bac. " I was at Mme. de Stael's, the daughter of Necker. She is a woman of wonderful wit and above vulgar prejudices of every kind. Her house is a kind of Temple of Apollo, where the men of wit and fashion are collected twice a week at supper and once at dinner and sometimes more frequently. The Comte de Clermont Tonnerre (one of their greatest orators) read to us a very pathetic oration, and the object was to show that as penalties are the legal compensation for injuries and crimes, the man who is hanged, having by that event paid his debt to society, ought not to be held in dishonour, and in like manner he who has been condemned for seven years to be flogged in the galleys should when he had served out his apprenticeship be received again into good company as if nothing had happened."

In April, 1791, Morris again visited Mme. de Stael, on the 13th, 16th and 17th of the month. He conversed with the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld, heard his hostess read her tragedy *Montmorenci*, and commented upon it that "she writes much better than she reads". He introduced his friend Short to her, enjoyed a wordy argument which was taking place between her and an Abbé,

met the British Ambassadress in her *salon* and remarked generally on the brilliancy of her guests, among whom he mentioned M. de Saint Leon, M. de Montmoron, M. de Chapelier and M. de Narbonne to whom he frequently referred as her lover *en titre*. This latter gentleman was certainly beloved by her for his noble appearance, his reputation for statesmanship, and his powers as a conversationalist. Whilst he was attractive to men he was irresistible to women. Mme. de Stael did not disguise her feelings for him. She was always frank and fearless, outspoken, contemptuous of etiquette, without the tact which might have led her to curb her unruly tongue. The times she thought warranted such boldness and she gloried in being able to supply it. Friendship was her religion and she regarded it as a derivative of love. Naturally enough, she preferred men friends to women friends, and though she knew a number of women in her semi-official capacity, those who claimed friendship with her were comparatively few. The ill-fated Duchesse de Grammont was one of the elect, and Mme. de Tessé who said of her, "If I were queen, I would order Mme. de Stael to talk to me always"; Mme. de Lauzun, and the Princesse de Poix, grandmother of the Vicomtesse de Noailles, and daughter by his first marriage of the Maréchal de Beauvau. This lady insisted on staying in Paris after all the *emigrés* had fled, and she was shut up alone at the Hôtel de Beauvau throughout the days of Terror with only a single youth to wait upon her. She was of great intelligence and pride, and beautiful in appearance. She was a friend of the Princesse d'Hénin, one of the few women whom Mme. de Stael really under-

stood and loved. According to the Vicomtesse de Noailles, the Princesse d'Hénin was "handsome, a woman of fashion and something of a coquette". Her name had been coupled with that of the Chevalier de Coigny and the Marquis de Tollendal. Mesdames de Laborde, de Tott, de Simiane, and de Bouon were also frequent visitors in Mme. de Stael's drawing-room shortly before the Revolution.

In 1790 Mme. de Stael followed her father to Coppet, but stayed only long enough to experience the bitterness of her remark, "People live here in silence in an infernal peace; I shudder, I am dying in this nothingness". In 1792 she made another flying visit, but corroborated her former opinion when she wrote, "I regard all Switzerland with a magnificent horror". She was back in Paris, however, before affairs had come to a head there, and found that the Revolution had been making steady progress. Many of her friends were in danger. On the eve of the September massacres she forced her way to the Hôtel de Ville and rescued Lally-Tollendal and Jaucourt from their executioners. She hid Narbonne in her house, and when she endeavoured to leave the city the mob attacked her carriage and she had a difficulty in escaping to join her parents at Rolle. This was the first taste of exile. Her second son was born at Rolle, but she did not stay very long with her father and mother, preferring to cross the Channel at the earliest possible moment and join the *emigrés* at Juniper Hall near Dorking, where a little colony of people of high distinction had established themselves. Here she found M. de Montmorency, Talleyrand, Lally-Tollendal, General d'Arblay, who was to make the acquaintance of his future wife, Fanny

Burney; Jaucourt, that "delightful man" who was "comic, entertaining, unaffected, unpretending and good-humoured," but "far from handsome"; Mme. de la Châtre, about thirty-two years old, of an elegant figure, well-read, full of *esprit*, very charming; Narbonne, "about forty, rather fat," who "would be handsome were it not for a squint in one eye"; Guibert, Girardin, Suard, the Duc de Guignes and the Princesse d'Hénin. Of this goodly company Mme. de Stael immediately took the lead, here as elsewhere. At one moment she thrilled her hearers by her passionate recitation of *Tancrede* "till she blinded us all around," as Mrs. Phillips put it, at another she entertained them by reading the first chapter of her *Influence of the Passions on the Happiness of Individuals and of Nations.* "Mme. de Stael is now at the head of the Colony of French Noblesse established near Mickleham," wrote Fanny Burney on 4th February, 1793; "she is one of the first women I have ever met with for abilities and extraordinary intellect." Friendship between the two was not to flourish, however, owing to Dr. Burney's disapproval of his daughter's intimacy with a Frenchwoman against whose reputation various rumours had reached them, rumours which Miss Burney herself hardly felt it right to ignore.

The little colony at Mickleham made the most of somewhat meagre resources of enjoyment; Talleyrand was the wit of the party, Lally-Tollendal the conversationalist. Mrs. Phillips having received an "irresistible invitation to dine" on 2nd April, 1793, heard the latter read *Le Comte de Strafford*, and agreed with Talleyrand that he was "un bon garcon, un très honnête garcon et rien de plus".

M. de Stael had left Paris in February, 1792, having been recalled to Sweden. He returned in February, 1793, but departed again in June and went to Coppet, where he met his wife. Mme. de Stael remained in Switzerland during the days of Terror, staying chiefly in Nyon, Lausanne and Zurich. Husband and wife were no better friends than formerly, and M. de Stael regarded her as that nameless abomination, "science in a petticoat". In May, 1794, Mme. Necker died and Mme. de Stael lingered on with her father, making her home a centre for revolutionists. In the autumn Morris visited her at Coppet and found this "little French society as gay as circumstances will permit". This autumn too she was fated to make the acquaintance of Benjamin Constant, who of all men influenced her life the most. She was then twenty-nine years of age, Constant being twenty-seven. Barras in his *Mémoires* gives an account of him as a young man, "a tall, affected and foolish-looking youth. Fiery fair hair which malicious people would have called reddish-brown, small eyes which one would have believed to be of the same colour, had not the spectacles sheltering them prevented their being seen, a delicate ironical mouth, seeming to make game of everything, even its owner, and which would have liked to be still more mocking were it possible,"—not a very taking picture, but Barras was prejudiced because Mme. de Stael begged him for favours on account of Constant whom she introduced, dragging him by the hand like an unwilling child. "The virility of her form, face and carriage," declared Barras of Mme. de Stael, "her manner of wearing her clothes, the strength of her intellectual concep-

tions, her exuberant vigour and energy, all, in short, would have led me to believe that she belonged rather to our sex than to the other." A *liaison* between Constant and Mme. de Stael was quickly established. A few weeks after he had made her acquaintance he wrote to Colombier, "It is the second time that I have met a woman who could replace the whole world to me, and who could in herself have been the whole world to me". The progress of their connection is told in his *Journal Intime.* It was a rule that he should leave her house by midnight, but one evening he pulled out his watch to prove to her that the hour of parting had not yet arrived. In disgust at the flight of time he smashed the unoffending watch upon the floor, but wrote next day exultingly: "I have not bought another watch. I have no longer any need of one." If he imagined that conquest lay all on his side, his cousin Rosalie was gifted with clearer vision, and discerned Mme. de Stael's love of adoration. "She would die," she wrote, "if she had not a crowd round her. In the absence of cats she would hold a court of rats, and even a court of insects would be preferable to none at all," and then she drew a spiteful picture of Mme. de Stael, upon whom she called when M. de Tracy, Adrien de Meun and Constant were in her drawing-room. "I found her surrounded by the fox, the little cat and the other," she said; "she was resting one of her elbows against the chest of the first, and toying with the head of the second, while the third stroked her neck and called her his 'dear little kitten'."

Early the following spring Mme. de Stael returned to Paris where her husband had resumed his position as Swedish Ambassador, and her *salon* was re-

opened not only to old royalist friends but to all the leading lights of the new *régime*. Choiseul was to meet Cabanis and Garat, Morellet, Tracy and Guinguené, Suard and the younger Lacratelle, Lanjuinais and Daunou. Boissy-d'Anglas, Barras and Tallien, Barante, Jaucourt and Montmorency, M. J. Chenier, Louvet and De Pange were among the mixed company who flocked to her open house. "The society of Paris was truly a very curious spectacle," wrote Mme. de Stael of these months. "Every tenth day (for Sunday no longer existed) all the elements of the old and new *régime* were seen united in the evening though not yet reconciled. The elegant manners of well-educated persons contrasted strangely with the humble costume which many still retained—their protection during the reign of Terror. Men, converted from the Jacobin party, entered for the first time into the society of the *grande monde*, and their self-love was more sensitive about the etiquette of the manners which they wished to imitate than on any other subject." Into this medley of members of the Government, men of the last reign, nobles returned from exile, editors, journalists and diplomatists, came Benjamin Constant, ambitious, emotional, brilliant, but too capricious to tread warily. "In the midst of the conversations, undertakings and intrigues of so many different sets," he declared, "my republican impartiality was entangled in great difficulties."

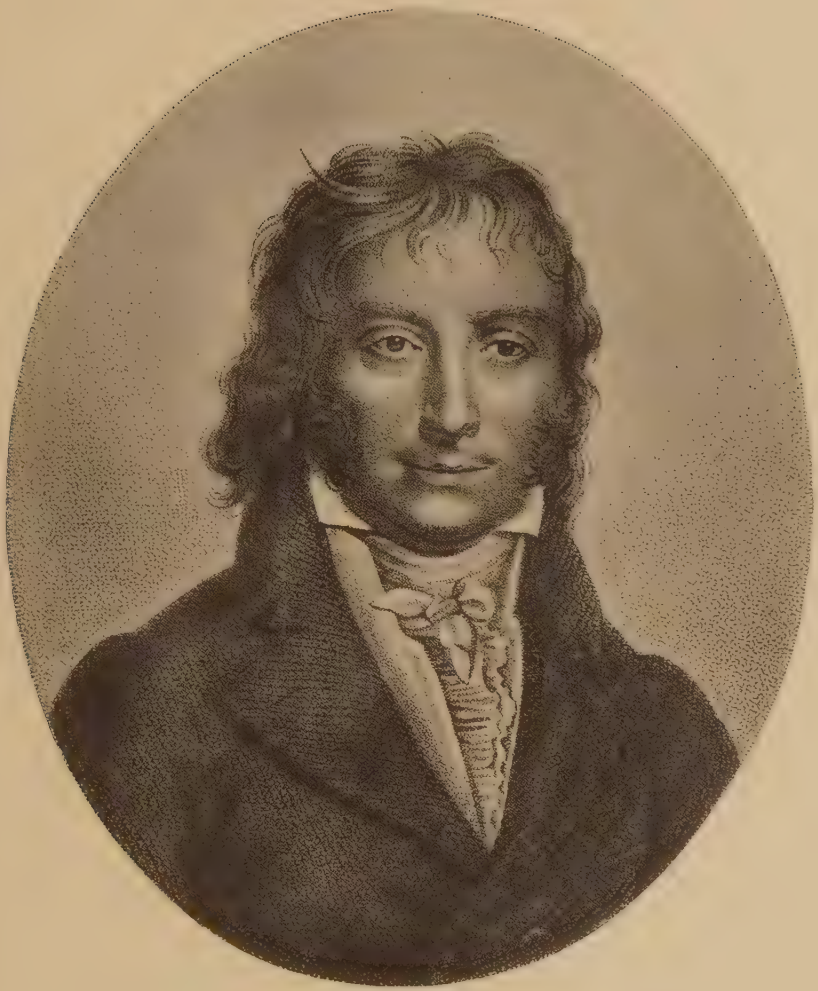
Mme. de Stael's position, however, was becoming difficult and delicate. Her drawing-room was too republican for the aristocrats, too aristocratic for the republicans. It became the rallying-point for Napoleon's enemies and a centre of the opposition.

Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte were her friends, but in the end they found it necessary to warn her. They were present the evening before that on which Constant was to give an address to her guests, and approaching his hostess the latter whispered in her ear: "You see your *salon* crowded with persons who please you; if I speak to-morrow it will be deserted. Consider the question." "It is necessary to follow our convictions," was Mme. de Stael's sole reply. A large company was to have assembled to hear the speech; instead she received letters of excuse from every quarter. Napoleon, thinking she was responsible for Constant's attitude, showed his dislike to the tone held by the brilliant *coterie* of which she was the leading genius. In January, 1796, she found it advisable to return to Coppet. Constant was her travelling companion, and for a whole year she remained in the country, returning to Paris in the spring of 1797. The following year M. de Stael definitely separated from his wife, who spent most of her time between Coppet and Paris, usually in the company of Constant. Her *salon* became a centre of intrigue and her life in the capital a whirlwind of balls, *fêtes*, and evening parties.

By the end of the century Mme. de Stael, although she had not yet declared herself to be in opposition, was doing what she could to work against Napoleon's interests. In April, 1800, she published *De la Littérature considerée dans ses rapports avec les Institutions sociales*, which was looked upon in the light of "a sort of ultimatum addressed to the First Consul".[1] For a couple of years, however, no active hostility towards her was shown by Napoleon.

[1] Paul Gautier, *Mme. de Stael et Napoleon.*

Early in 1802 M. de Stael died and she remained at Coppet, her formal exiledom being decided upon early in 1803, and carried out in the autumn of that year. It is from this date that she gradually built up the intellectual circle which made Coppet famous. *Delphine* had appeared in December, 1802, and from that time her literary reputation was assured, her political influence subsided. Round her was a host of *littérateurs* and scientists; the diversions at Coppet were literary, dramatic, conversational. De Gérando, Secretary of the Ministry, became one of the principal characters in the circle of illustrious men who gathered round her. Mme. de Krudener, author of *Valérie*, visited her and introduced her semi-mystic atmosphere, also Sismondi, economist and historian, who was to remain her faithful friend to the last, and Chateaubriand. The latter described his visit thus: "I found her alone, buried in her castle, which was built round a melancholy courtyard. I spoke to her of her fortune and of her solitude as a precious means of independence and happiness: I offended her. Mme. de Stael loved society: she looked upon herself as the most wretched of women in an exile with which I should have been enchanted." The truth was that however much Mme. de Stael was surrounded by friends, away from Paris she was lonely. The capital was the central figure of all her visions, and even as she gazed on the heights of Mont Blanc, she longed for the paving-stones of the city. A journey to Germany, accompanied by Constant, was the first long break in her life in Switzerland, but her travels ended with the death of M. Necker in 1804, when she returned to Coppet distraught with grief, and, after writing her father's life, once more filled



BENJAMIN CONSTANT

her house with as many visitors as it would hold. It was the custom for the guests to assemble at eleven o'clock for breakfast, at which meal they commenced their literary discussions which were resumed at dinner and lasted until midnight. Mme. de Stael did more than her share of the talking, but there was always magic in her words. "Life is for me like a ball where the music has ceased," said Sismondi when she was silent. Constant was beginning to feel that her influence over him was an obsession. "I have never known one," he wrote, "who without being aware of it, is more continually exigent, who more completely absorbs the life of every one near her, or who, with all her qualities, has a more positive personality. All one's life—one's minutes, one's hours, even years must be at her disposal; and when she lets herself go, there is a crash as of thunderstorms and earthquakes. She is like a spoilt child—that sums her up." And again: "To-day Mme. de Stael has gone to Geneva. Bonstetten, Schlegel, Sismondi and I dined like schoolboys whose headmaster is away. Strange woman that she is. Her power of dominating is inexplicable, yet very real, over every one who comes near her. If only she had control over herself she could govern the world." Bonstetten, her old friend, was an amateur in letters, friend of Gray and at one time Bernese governor of Nyon. Schlegel was her children's tutor and her own friend. His brother, "a globular little man, extraordinarily fat, with a pointed nose issuing from two shiny cheeks, and underneath this pointed nose a mouth that smiles with honeyed sweetness," was also one of the Coppet circle.

After a triumphant visit to Italy, Mme. de Stael

returned to Switzerland in the summer of 1805 and worked at *Corinne* which was published early in 1807. In the spring of 1806 she took up her residence temporarily at Auxerre, where she was surrounded by friends as usual, notably Montmorency, Camille Jordan, Schlegel, etc. But she was soon back again in Coppet, and her circle there was extending. De Candolle, the author of a new system of botany, joined it, and Pictet, Professor of Physics, Dumont, associate of Mirabeau and friend of Jeremy Bentham, Prévost, Cellerier, and Chateauvieux, who gave an account of the theatrical representations, which he regarded as Mme. de Stael's chief form of entertainment. "She was seconded in them," he wrote, "by Comte Elzéar de Sabran, Charles de Labédoyere, and Don Pedro de Souza, now Marquis de Palmella. She had an admirable voice and superior expression on the stage. She especially excelled in *soubrette rôles*." Frederika Brun, the authoress, Mme. Rilliet-Huber, Mme. Necker de Saussure, cousin of Mme. de Stael, Mme. Vernet-Pictet, the Duchesse de Courland and Mme. Récamier were amongst the privileged friends of Mme. de Stael's own sex; whilst Lemontey, author of a *History of the Regency* and of an *Essay on the Monarchy of Louis XIV.*, Prince Augustus of Prussia, Baron von Voght, Werner, the author of *Luther*, *Wanda* and *Attila*, Carl Ritter, Oelenschlaeger, the Danish poet, Lacratelle, Cuvier, Prosper de Barante, son of the Prefect of Geneva, and Vincenzo Monti, the Italian poet of whom Albertine de Stael wrote, "Mamma cared for nothing in Italy except Monti and the sea," swelled the ranks of the male celebrities. Many of these guests have put into writing their impressions

of Coppet, and there is no lack of interesting and personal description of life in this secluded spot. What Ferney was to Voltaire, Coppet was to Mme. de Stael, said Sainte-Beuve, "with a much more poetic halo around it and with a nobler life. . . . The beauty of the site, the woods which shade it, the sex of the poet, the enthusiasm that we breathe there, the elegance of the company, the glory of their names, the promenades along the lake, the mornings in the park, the mysteries and the passions that we may suppose inevitable there, all combine to enchant us with the image of this abode." One of the most homely pictures was given by the artist Mme. le Brun, who said of Mme. de Stael that she "receives with grace and without affectation: she leaves her company free all the morning, but they unite in the evening. It is only after dinner that they can converse with her. She then walks in her *salon*, holding in her hand a little green branch, and her words have an ardour quite peculiar to her; it is impossible to interrupt her. At these times she produces on one the effect of an *improvisatrice*. I have seen *Semiramis* played at Coppet. Mme. de Stael acted as Azema; she was very successful in some passages of this *rôle* but her acting was unequal. Mme. Récamier, her friend, nearly died with fear in her part of Semiramis; M. de Sabran was not too much at home in his *rôle* of Arsace. I have always observed that comedies and proverbs can be tolerably well played in society, but never tragedies." Pictet de Sergy, on the contrary, declared that Mme. de Stael was equally successful in tragedy and in comedy. "The great *salle* of the *rez de chaussée* of the château was converted into a complete and

permanent theatre," he wrote, "and there she and her friends acted not merely comedy, but more frequently tragedy. The Comte de Sabran being small of stature appeared nearly crushed under the helmet of Pyrrhus; Mme. Récamier represented Andromache, and Mme. de Stael personated with marvellous effect Hermione. The Comtes de Labédoyère threw their youthful French vivacity into the plays. From time to time Mme. de Stael left her feudal home and transported all her noble *cortège* to Geneva, where they gave representations in the great building called the Douane, on the Place de Molard. All the best society of the city descended from the Rue des Granges or the Taconnerie into this large hall of the common people, borne thither by an irresistible impulse—a place where they seldom deigned to be found, especially at night. There I still see Mme. de Stael, imposing and terrible, in the *rôle* of Phædre; and Benjamin Constant, but not, as they have lately reported him, personating Hyppolytus in blue spectacles which he absolutely refused to lay aside."

Mme. Récamier was thoroughly at home in the Coppet atmosphere. She was undoubtedly Mme. de Stael's best woman friend. Her first visit commenced in July, 1807, and she threw herself heart and soul into the round of work and pleasure which was unceasing in the vicinity of her hostess. Many of the guests were already known to her, and at Coppet it was difficult for any one to remain a stranger for long. Much later, in 1819, Mme. Récamier, at the suggestion of Ballanche and in collaboration with him, wrote some of her recollections of these visits.

"Europe was being overrun, and meanwhile, in

the heart of Europe, on the banks of the Lake Geneva, was a nook where both the politeness and elegance of old French manners and customs and independence of thought, the generous ideas of patriotism and liberty had taken refuge. And this nook was a place of exile, upon which the master of the world frequently condescended to look down with his threatening glance . . . at the Château of Coppet there were other things than the worship of liberty and independence of thought. Romantic sentiments, poetry, all the arts which appeal to the noble faculties of man had also found shelter there.

"Mme. de Stael had received from Nature immense faculties and that prodigious activity which could make the best of them all. Her great mind took in the whole domain of human intelligence and her ardent soul was such that it extended still further these boundaries. She was endowed with that ascendency which rallies the ideas of others around its own ideas, and she had, beside this, the great power which stirs tranquil souls, which gives nourishment to restless minds and which displaces the limits of accepted things. She could interest herself at the same time in that fermentation of ideas about the Infinite which was working in German minds, and in that something positive which wanted to establish itself in France. She had in her mind the whole future of Europe. Her ideas were veritable creations; her reveries even, when applied to literature or politics, were the essayings of a great and powerful imagination. All this was like the investigating genius of a Christopher Columbus throwing out everywhere sounding lines and trying to find the road to another continent. A fresh poetry will no

doubt be born from such depths of thought; the first accents of this poetry were heard by Mme. de Stael."

After her travels in Germany in 1808, Mme. de Stael commenced *De l'Allemagne;* Constant was working on *Wallenstein* and was entering into secret negotiations for his marriage with Charlotte Dutertre, which took place in that year, and gave rise on its discovery to storms and convulsions in the breast of Mme. de Stael. For the following two years Coppet was crowded with visitors, with the exception of short intervals when its hostess was absent. Mme. Récamier paid another visit in 1809, and remained in touch with all that went on there. Baron von Voght was her correspondent, and in his letters is another peep at Coppet in 1810. "The life which is led at Coppet agrees perfectly with me," he wrote, "its society still more. I love the wit of Constant, the erudition of Schlegel, the amiability of Sabran, the talent and character of Sismondi, the simplicity, truthfulness and intellectual soundness of Auguste, the son, and the *spirituelle* gentleness of Albertine, the daughter. I must not forget Bonstetten; good, excellent, full of varied knowledge—so facile in mind and character, so rich in all that inspires esteem and confidence. Your great friend animates and enlivens all around her, and imparts mind to all. In every corner some one is at work on some intellectual task. Corinne herself with her delicious *Letters on Germany* . . . Constant and Auguste are each writing a tragedy, Sabran a comic opera, Sismondi his history, Bonstetten his philosophy, and I my letter to Juliette. . . .

"Mlle. Jenner has played a part in a tragedy by Werner which was acted before twenty persons on

Friday. She, Werner, and Schlegel acted to perfection. I was exceedingly affected. . . . The arrival of Cuvier has been a happy distraction for Mme. de Stael; they have been well pleased with each other."

An element of mysticism was slowly but surely creeping into the Coppet atmosphere at this time, as foreshadowed by Mme. Récamier. Chateauvieux, alluding to the discussions, said "they abounded in new and profound ideas on the mysteries of our moral nature. No one was silent in these debates; all questions were attacked and analysed, even to their foundations." Bonstetten was even more explicit. He wrote to Frederika Brun, "Nothing is more changed than our world at Coppet. These people have become Catholics, Boehmists, Martinists, mystics, thanks to Schlegel and the German. . . . Oelenschlaeger lives here, a handsome young Dane; Overbeck and Werner have arrived; a very great number of Germans and Americans come here to ventilate their opinions. . . . Tieck is coming." There was sufficient diversity of creed and opinion to give rise to discussion of the most virulent type. The circle at the château presented, according to M. Petit-Senn, "the aspect of a synod of quite novel character. The different systems of religion were strongly contrasted there. Catholicism was represented by Mathieu de Montmorency; Quietism by M. de Langallerie; Illuminism by M. de Divonne; Rationalism by Baron von Vogt; Calvinism by the Pastor Maulinie. Even Benjamin Constant, then occupied with his work on Religions, brought his tribute to the theological conferences—conferences which borrowed no austerity from the accidents of

the time or the place. The conversations at dinner and in the evening were chiefly on religious subjects of the most mystic nature and were seldom changed even for the news of the day or for brief musical entertainments."

Doubtless both Werner and Chateauvieux had a share in the impetus given to the new trend of thought. The former was a lyrical poet, the author of tragedies, a mystic, a Freemason and a Catholic priest. Mme. de Stael said of him, "such a union of intellect and heart, of nature and enthusiasm, of gaiety and sadness, is quite unique, and what tact combined with force he has". He reciprocated by writing to Counsellor Schneffer: "Mme. de Stael is a queen, and no man of intelligence who comes within her circle can escape from it, for she retains us by a sort of magic". Chateauvieux was a man of somewhat different build. According to Sismondi, he was "the most amiable, the most witty of all the parish of Calvin, and his conversation was always animated, piquant and new". The bond between him and his hostess was a close one. "Her friendship," he wrote after her death, "has made during twenty-five years the charm of my life; my opinions, my sentiments have been formed on hers." Chateauvieux was not first favourite among the men who had a claim upon her friendship, however, for that place was filled by Mathieu de Montmorency, of whom she declared, "I respected him more than any other in the world since the death of my father," the highest compliment it lay in her nature to pay. Another, almost equally flattering, considering its source, was a remark addressed to Annette de Gérando, her dearest woman friend with the exception of Mme. Récamier. "No

cloud," she wrote to Mme. de Gérando, "has ever obscured our friendship; I prize your heart and your enlightened mind."

The time was at hand, however, when the best of friendships would not suffice to dispel the gathering troubles. The "hundred-headed hydra as regards unhappiness," as Mme. de Stael described her exile, was an ever augmenting menace to her peace of mind. The censorship of *De l'Allemagne* increased the strictures laid upon her freedom. In 1811 Mme. de Stael contracted a marriage with Rocca, but this alliance did little to chain her to the quiet spot where she felt as though she must eat her very heart out through inaction. In May of the following year she fled from Coppet to Vienna, which she reached on the 6th of June, proceeding thence to Russia and in the following September to England. She arrived in London in June, 1813, where she was most enthusiastically received and sought after in society. Among the people whom she visited were Lords Lansdowne, Grey, Holland, Harrowby, Erskine, Byron, Liverpool, Lord and Lady Jersey, Lord and Lady Hardwicke, Sir James Mackintosh and Sir Samuel Romilly. Rogers, Coleridge, Canning, Croker, Bowles, Wilberforce and Mme. d'Arblay, who had relented since earlier days, all showed tribute to her powers and reputation by an encouraging intimacy. Her own gatherings were held at her house, 30 Argyll Place, Regent Street, and her drawing-room became the rendezvous of all that was highest in rank and fashion. It was said that she spoiled the campaign of Dr. and Miss Edgeworth who had been lionised during the earlier part of the season. According to her usual rule, the only passport to her

salon was personal merit, distinction in literature or promise of genius, and Byron was astonished at the motley, cosmopolitan scene at her house which, as he puts it, reminded him of "the grave where all distinctions are levelled". At first he showed cynicism and contempt where she was concerned, but in the end he owned that he was conquered by the woman who "wrote octavos and talked folios". He declared with qualified admiration: "Her works are my delight, and so is she herself, for half an hour. I don't like her politics—at least her *having changed* them; had she been *qualis ab incepto*, it were nothing. But she is a woman by herself, and has done more than all the rest of them together, intellectually;—she ought to have been a man;" and again, "I admire her abilities, but really her society is overwhelming —an avalanche that buries one in glittering sophistry —all snow and sophistry". In 1816 when he was living in the Diodati Villa, Byron became a frequent guest at Coppet, but that was after Mme. de Stael had enjoyed her greatest triumph. In May, 1814, upon the fall of Napoleon, she was able to return to Paris, and her *salon* was reopened with renewed glory and even more than its former brilliancy. All the celebrities in Paris sought her drawing-room and welcomed her back in their midst. Mathieu de Montmorency was again at Court, Mme. Récamier hurried from Italy to grace her friend's circle once more with her undiminished beauty. Thus Mme. de Stael's two best personal friends were with her. But her health was breaking up, life was receding, her work was nearing its close. Still a few vivid pictures remain of evenings pleasantly spent in her *salon*. One occurs in the *Souvenirs* of M. Pictet de Sergy of

Geneva. "I passed last evening at Mme. de Stael's," he wrote, "for the Emperor Alexander was to be there, and I wished to speak to him on behalf of Geneva; he has the best inclination towards us. I found there also Talleyrand, Lafayette, Lally-Tollendal, the two Montmorencys, M. de Sabran, the Duchess of Courland, and a crowd of princes and Ambassadors. It was a true triumph for the mistress of the house, a triumph of high interest, and one which was prolonged until three o'clock in the morning with continually increasing *éclat*."

"She is crowned with success," wrote Bonstetten of the same period; "the Emperor of Russia, kings, generals, all who have a name, frequent her mansion in Paris." About this time she became acquainted with Villemain, who composed the following eulogistic essay upon her charms and powers. "I have often seen Mme. de Stael," he wrote, "illuminate with a vivid light accidental conversations on politics, letters, art; glance over the past and the present as two regions entirely open to her view; divine that which she knew not; evoke into life and brightness, by the lighting of thought, that which was only a dead souvenir buried in history; portray men as she recalled them; judge, for example, the Cardinal de Richelieu with a profound sagacity, and, I may add, with a noble womanly wrath; then the Emperor Napoleon, who combined in her estimation all despotisms, and whom her elegant speech disclosed, at all points of the horizon, as a gigantic shadow obscuring them all. And how frequently, in the midst of these animated discussions, this sudden display of virile reason and eloquence, have I seen her pass suddenly to private interests, treating them with the

same ardour; giving to some modest or disgraced merit a decisive support, by those words of imperative fascination or touching pathos which she knew how to address to men of the world, the most self-defended against emotion. Sometimes by that conciliatory ardour which was a tie between the best representatives of all parties, and that legitimate right of her intellect which gave her hardly less power over M. de Blacas or M. de Montmorency, than over M. de Lafayette or Baron Louis, I have seen her, in the same evening, obtain admission to the household of the King for a man of merit as independent as unfortunate, re-establish in their employments functionaries who had been devoted, but with honour, to the imperial power that she had combated, and serve with her credit men of letters, who, during her exile, had denied her talents."

Another intimate picture is interesting because it describes an interview between Mme. de Stael and Wellington. It occurs in a letter from M. A. de Gustine to Sophie Gay. "The *salon* of Mme. de Stael," he wrote in the spring of 1814, "is a mirror which represents the history of the times. What one sees there is as instructive as many books, and gayer than many comedies. . . . It is life, it is intellect that shines here, the illuminations of genius." The Duke of Wellington was expected, the Abbé de Pradt, Constant and Lafayette were present. Mme. Récamier entered the room and remained in conversation with her hostess until the Duke came. "He entered at last," continued De Gustine; "the nobleness of his face, the simplicity of his manners, produced on us a most agreeable effect. His pride (for he ought to have some) has even the grace of timidity.

Mme. de Stael, herself impressed by his bearing and language, so little French, remarked, 'He bears his glory as if it were nothing'. Then, with a return of her patriotism, she whispered in my ear, 'It is necessary to admit, however, that never did nature make a great man at so little expense'. The Duke had barely entered the *salon* when he was seized upon by the Abbé de Pradt, who talked of his own ideas of military tactics for nearly an hour. Mme. de Stael was angry and all the others were bored. Schlegel drew a comparison with the rhetorician who discoursed on the art of war to Hannibal. At length his hostess routed the pertinacious Abbé, and started a conversation with the Duke on the English Constitution. She could not reconcile political liberty with the servile forms which remained in the individual relations of a society so proud of this liberty. 'Words and forms shock nobody in a truly free community,' said the Duke; 'we keep our old formulas as a homage to the past, just as an old monument is kept up when its original object no longer exists.' 'Is it true,' she asked, 'that your Lord Chancellor speaks to the King kneeling, in the session of Parliament?' 'It is true.' 'How is it done?' 'Why, Madame, as I say, he kneels when he speaks.' 'But how?' she continued. 'Would you see?' responded the Duke, and he cast himself at the feet of our Corinne. 'I wish that all the world saw it,' exclaimed Mme. de Stael. The whole company applauded. I will not answer for their unanimity at the bottom of the stairs." After this incident De Gustine stayed on when the rest had all departed except Schlegel. "What happiness if one could be a queen for twenty-four hours," she

said to him, "how many beautiful things one could say." "These words," continued the writer, "are like those which made my uncle, the Comte de Sabran say, 'She wished the whole world were a *salon* and she the centre light of it'." It was De Gustine who declared that in a two hours' conversation with Mme. de Stael enough material was discussed to make a volume in print.

After two months spent in Paris she returned to Coppet for the sake of her health, but the winter of 1814-15 saw her back in the capital, her *salon* still the most sought after of all. Lamartine in the *Histoire de la Restauration* gave some account of its constitution. "Her society," he wrote, "was composed of some few republicans, faithful survivors of the Gironde and of Clichy; some remnants of the constitutional party of the Constituent Assembly; some new royalists; of philosophers, orators, poets, writers and journalists of all dates. She was the centre of all these opinions, of all these talents, naturalised in her *salon* by the goodness of her soul and the tolerance of her genius. She loved every one, because she comprehended every one. She was universally loved, because her own opinions had never been tinged with hatred, though with enthusiasm; and this enthusiasm was the natural ardour of her heart and her speech. Her conversation was an endless ode. Her guests pressed around her to witness the continual display of high ideas and magnanimous sentiments, expressed in the inoffensive eloquence of a woman. They went forth passionate against tyranny, and for liberty, for genius, for the unlimited foresights of the imagination. The fire of this *salon* warmed Europe. Mme. de Stael was the Mirabeau

of conversation and of letters. A sublime and ravishing delirium took possession of her auditors. The world had not seen, since the Sibyl, the incarnation of virile genius in a woman; she was the Sibyl of two ages, of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; of the Revolution in its cradle; of the Revolution in its tomb." Remarks which, allowing them to be duly discounted, contained at least a modicum of the truth.

It is not to be supposed that her own circle was the only one which Mme. de Stael graced. She was never more in demand, never more intellectually vigorous or conversationally brilliant than in the short period immediately preceding the Hundred Days which necessitated her immediate flight. Villemain saw her in the drawing-room of Lavoisier's widow—later Mme. de Rumford—on the arrival of the news that Napoleon had reached France from Elba. She was agitated and unstrung, and her presence did not tend to calm the troubled minds of those already present. "In the dress that she ordinarily wore, at once brilliant and negligent, under the scarlet turban which half enclosed her abundant black hair and agreed so well with the dazzling expression of her eyes, she seemed no longer the same person," remarked Villemain. "She was greatly agitated, worn out and suffering, her smile was one of inexpressible sadness. 'As for me,' she cried, 'I have only the power to fly. This is frightful.'" It is a characteristic glimpse of a woman who needed an audience to show herself in her true nature, be it in grief, in fear, in pleasure, or in ambition. Whatever her mood, whatever her purpose, the world was always in her confidence. She did nothing in the silence of her

chamber, she played before a company and demanded always its indulgence, its praise, its adoration.

After her return to Coppet her health continued to trouble her; Rocca was ill too, and the only event which broke into a quiet interlude was the marriage of her daughter Albertine to the Duc de Broglie. Once established in Paris the Duchesse de Broglie's *salon* vied in importance with that held by her mother.

In June, 1816, Byron became Mme. de Stael's frequent guest. "She has made Coppet," he wrote, "as agreeable to me as society and talent can make any place on earth. Bonstetten is there a good deal. He is a fine, lively old man and much esteemed by his compatriots. All there are well excepting Rocca, who, I am sorry to say, looks in a very bad state of health. Schlegel is in high force, and Mme. de Stael is as brilliant as ever." Sismondi was present also and several of the old friends. Byron's admiration for Bonstetten was amply returned by the latter who wrote to his friend Matthisson, the poet: "I spent a whole evening with these imaginative beings (Byron and Hobhouse) and the Stael and her beautiful daughter, the Duchesse de Broglie, at Coppet. Gaiety and wit flew all around. The Stael surpassed us all. I cannot compare Byron with any other creature. His voice is music; his features those of an angel; but an only half-honest little demon lightens through his sarcasm." Brougham was another guest who dined at Coppet. In August of the same year Bonstetten mentioned an evening at the château. "I have conducted Bell, the coadjutor of Lancaster in the new mode of instruction, to our dear Coppet. I found there the charming Lady Anna

Maria Elliot, the eldest daughter of Lord Minto, of whom Mme. de Stael said that she is the most intelligent Englishwoman she had even seen. The *salon* was full of eminent personages. Mme. de Stael and Bell did the talking, all the rest of the company listened. At five o'clock there arrived Lord Byron, Mme. de Montgelas, who, they say, reigns over Bavaria, Lady Hamilton, one of the Pictets, an illustrious Italian, the Duc and Duchesse de Broglie, and so on. I was never at so intellectual a dinner party or a more agreeable one. At eight o'clock the *salon* was again filled. Lord Breadalbane, the De Saussures and others arrived. I returned with Dumont." This period was the final blaze in the brilliancy of the Coppet *salon*. Bayle, in a moment of exaggerated enthusiasm, wrote: "To my eyes the phenomenon rises even to political importance. Had it continued, all the Academies of Europe would have paled before it. I know not what could be set off against a *salon* where Dumont, Bonstetten, the Pictets, Romilly, Brougham, Schlegel, De Broglie, De Brême, and Byron discussed the grandest questions of ethics and the arts before Mesdames Necker de Saussure, de Broglie and de Stael. There were here six hundred persons, the most distinguished of Europe. Men of intellect, of wealth, of the greatest titles, all came here to seek pleasure in the *salon* of the illustrious woman for whom France weeps." M. Caro called the château "an intellectual Coblenz on the frontier of France . . . whence came forth political doctrines, a programme of ideas, a race of statesmen, a school of thinkers, which have filled, with their combats, their triumphs, or their defeats, more than half a century of our history".

In this encomium it is impossible not to lose sight of the woman in gazing upon her *salon*. Mme. de Stael was an interesting personality, far more so in her moods, her caprices, her vivacity, her masculinity, her independence in thought and action, her subjection to her own emotions than when described as the captain of a crowded vessel sailing the social seas. Perhaps of all the women touched upon in this volume she suffers most from the limitation to a particular side of life. Brightly as she shone amidst her friends, it does not really suffice to describe her only from the social point of view. The canvas is too small for the picture, for the broad lines of her character, for the hurrying incidents of her career, for the turbulent stream of her emotions and the causes which evoked them. She was cramped in life, she has been cramped ever since in biography. It has been as impossible to remove the limitations of the pen as it was for her in her lifetime to overcome the limitations of circumstances. And no one would have more thoroughly appreciated a boundless field of action.

Towards the close of 1816 she was dying, but she made one more attempt to rally her waning powers and reach Paris once more. Throughout the winter of 1616-17 her *salon* in the capital was still thronged. Wellington and Lafayette were present, Chateaubriand, Talleyrand, Constant, the Schlegels, Sismondi, the Duchesse de Duras, Mme. Récamier, Canova, Humboldt and Blucher from Berlin and a number of Englishmen of rank and genius. Even in her chamber when lying on her sick-bed she continued to receive her most intimate friends. Chateaubriand was among the last to visit

her, and, oddly enough, one comparative stranger, George Ticknor, the American. Mme. de Stael was staying with her daughter, the Duchesse de Broglie, and dinner parties were still held every day. "Society is necessary to her," said Ticknor. "There is a coterie every evening, the best in Paris." The Duke of Wellington called in person every day to inquire after her, and Benjamin Constant spent the last night at her bed-side. She passed away at five o'clock on the morning of 14th July, 1817, having occupied the previous day in conversation with her friends. Thus she died in the familiar atmosphere in which she had lived.

IX. MADAME RÉCAMIER

THE SALON OF LITERATURE

APART from the acknowledged charm of its central figure, "La bellissima Zulietta," to use Canova's *nom de caresse* for Mme. Récamier, a peculiar interest attaches to her *salon* which distinguishes it from similar gatherings held for two centuries after the reunions at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Firstly, Mme. Récamier's *salon* was the last of its kind, the final coterie of the *haut noblesse*, and, secondly, being entirely at the mercy of unsettled political influences, it was divided into three distinct sections, each of them representative of the particular dynasty under which it flourished. Republicanism, stepping in with an all-levelling tread, had stamped out the exclusiveness which at one time was the prominent feature of these assemblies; the ever-spreading power of the press seminated broadcast news and intelligence which had previously been focussed in the drawing-rooms of the elect; the increase in general prosperity, too, had depreciated the value of learning, wit and culture, displacing them in favour of qualities better calculated to stand the test of a monetary standard. Here are some of the causes to which the downfall of the *salon* may be attributed. And further, public amusements of all kinds were increasing rapidly in popularity, clubs came into fashion, the concentrated habits of the

aristocratic few were becoming diffused and scattered among the democratic many, and the powers which had formerly been vested in the *salon* proper, dispersed to appear again in fragmentary and vulgar incompleteness in the meeting-places frequented by the common crowd. In short, the *raison d'être* of the *salon* was no more and its glory had departed.

The first period of Mme. Récamier's *salon* extended from 1798 to 1814, through the Consulate into the Empire and to the Restoration of the Bourbon dynasty, a transition period in which France was reviving after the Reign of Terror only to be plunged afresh into gloom as Napoleon's sway became more and more despotic. He it was who cast an ever-darkening shadow on the destiny of the high-born beauty whose influence on the social life of her time was paramount. Like a radiant star which no intervening obstacle had power to extinguish, she shone upon the ever-thickening clouds of political intrigue, casting a beam of light wherever she had the good fortune to appear, and whilst her rays were temporarily dimmed by the wayward wishes of her oppressor, they burst forth with renewed strength at the time of his fall and the restoration to power of those in sympathy with her.

The second section commenced in 1819, when she retired to the Abbaye-aux-Bois owing to reverses of fortune, and lasted until 1830 when a change in the character of her receptions again took place. The gatherings were still held in the convent-retreat at the Abbaye, but they now became literary in tendency rather than political or merely social, and were chiefly devoted to their most important patron, Chateaubriand. At the height of this third and last period

they resembled more closely than at any other the style and purpose of the *salons* of ancient France. Mme. Récamier's tact and hospitality never failed her in adjusting or removing the conflicting elements of professional or literary jealousy, as in earlier times they had never failed her in amalgamating differences of political opinion; in these later days, too, members of the new government continued to mingle with those retired from the old, so that her duties as hostess were as arduous as ever.

The incomparable Juliette or, to be more exact, Jeanne Françoise Julie Adelaide Bernard, was born at Lyons on 3rd December, 1777, and was entered in the parish register as the daughter of Jean Bernard, notary of that city. The mother, whose maiden name was Matton, was a beautiful and shrewd woman of the world, and did all she could to fit Juliette for the *rôle* she intended her to play in society. At the age of seven the child was placed in the Convent of La Déserte at Lyons, and three years later she "left with regret that tranquil and innocent period of life to enter upon one of turmoil". She attributed an immense influence over her whole life to these years, "the memory of which comes back to me," she said, "like a vague, sweet dream with its clouds of incense, its innumerable ceremonies, its procession in the gardens, its chants and its flowers". It was here she received the vivid impressions of faith which helped her to retain her religious convictions amidst the conflicting influences of later years.

The *ancien régime* lasted through her childhood: Louis XVI. at the mercy of his people's caprices, admitted the public to the dining-room at Versailles during the royal meals. Mme. Bernard took her

young daughter to this exhibition of the King's home-life, and Marie Antoinette, struck by the child's beauty, ordered her to appear in the private apartments where she was compared in height and appearance with Madame Royale who was of about the same age and who showed intense indignation at being brought into close contact with "a girl of the rabble".

Juliette's education was conducted with great care until she reached the age of fifteen; dancing, singing, and the harp and the piano being to the fore among her accomplishments. Her childish grace endeared her to Monsieur La Harpe and drew the attention of other literary men who frequented her mother's house. Among her earliest friends was Jacques Récamier, the Paris banker, to whom she was married in April, 1793, during the Reign of Terror. Récamier was handsome, rich and old enough to be her father, a relationship which it was hinted he may have actually borne to her, the supposition being that he wished to secure to her a fortune in times of disaster when society had suffered annihilation, home-ties were obliterated and it seemed probable that each day might claim him a victim to the guillotine. For some years Juliette's life was passed in comparative seclusion; immediately upon her marriage she lived with her mother, and later Récamier installed them both in a house at Clichy. A fact which corroborated the idea of a strange relationship between husband and wife was the absence of a religious marriage-ceremony, the usual custom among people in their station of life, which under ordinary circumstances would have been solemnised immediately the country became more settled. Security was restored

in 1796 and an immediate reaction took place in favour of social gatherings. For fifteen months after the establishment of the Directory Juliette remained in the background, but when she made her *début*, she won the most extraordinary successes by virtue of her charm and beauty. Attempts have often been made to analyse and describe the qualities wherein her peculiar fascination lay, but hitherto without success. Perhaps Miss Edgeworth came nearest to the truth when she remarked, "She is certainly handsome, very handsome, but there is much of the *magic of fashion* in the enthusiasm she creates". At all events her influence swayed crowds and individuals alike, and her presence was known on at least one occasion to have turned the attention of the public from Napoleon himself, much to the latter's displeasure.

In 1798 M. Récamier bought the house in the Rue de Mont Blanc (later Chaussée d'Antin), which became one of the best known and most frequented resorts in Paris. From the negotiations for the purchase of the house a close friendship took its origin between Juliette and Mme. de Stael which lasted until the death of the famous author of *Corinne*. The day, as Juliette herself said, marked an epoch in her life. The lady, who was not introduced by name, "came about the sale of a house". "Her costume was peculiar; she wore a morning gown and a little dress hat trimmed with flowers. I took her for a foreigner. I was struck by the beauty of her eyes and her expression . . . she both awed and attracted me. I was conscious at once of her genuineness and her superiority. This interview was only a passing one, but it left a deep impression upon me. I thought

only of Madame de Stael, so much did I feel the influence of that strong and earnest personality."

By the beginning of the new century the fame of Juliette's receptions was already widespread, and her house was regarded as one of the show-places of the French capital. Mary Berry in her journal of 10th April, 1802, wrote: "We were resolved not to leave Paris without seeing the most elegant house in it, fitted up in the new style. It is that formerly inhabited by Necker [father of Mme. de Stael] in the Chaussée d'Antin, close to Perrégaux's. There are no large rooms nor a great many of them; but it is certainly fitted up with all the *recherche* and expense possible in what is now called *le goût antique*. But the candelabra, pendules, etc., though exquisitely finished, are in that sort of minute frittered style which I think so much less noble than that of fifteen or twenty years ago. All the chairs are mahogany enriched with ormolu and covered either with cloth or silk, those in the *salon* trimmed with flat gold lace in good taste. Her bed is reckoned the most beautiful in Paris—it, too, is of mahogany enriched with ormolu and bronze and raised upon two steps of the same wood." After describing the draperies, Miss Berry continues: "At the foot of the bed stood a fine Grecian lamp of ormolu, with a little figure of the same metal bending over it; and at the head of the bed another stand, upon which was placed a large ornamented flower-pot, containing a large artificial rose-tree, the branches of which must nod very near her nose in bed. Out of this bedroom is a beautiful little *salle de bain*. The walls inlaid with satinwood and mahogany and slight arabesque patterns in black upon the satinwood. The bath presents

itself as a sofa in recess, covered with a cushion of scarlet cloth embroidered and laced with black. Beyond this again is a very little boudoir entirely lined with quilted pea-green lustring, drawn altogether in a bunch in the middle of the ceiling." That Juliette was undoubtedly proud of this suite of apartments, which indeed made a setting worthy of her in comfort and brilliancy, may be gathered from the fact that she invariably invited her friends to inspect the appointments of her house, and the luxury and elegance aroused the admiration of all, for at that period such extravagance was unusual. M. Récamier was now at the height of his prosperity and the most distinguished guests were entertained both at the town house and at Clichy.

Sainte-Beuve spoke of Juliette at the time of the Consulate as "brilliant, fêted, applauded by every one, the youngest queen of elegance". Her successes outside her own establishments were too numerous to be mentioned in a place which purports to deal more particularly with her powers as a hostess. She had already charmed the First Consul, at the only meeting she was destined to have with the man who later exercised a sinister influence upon her fortunes; already his brother Lucien had suffered no little ridicule on account of the effusive epistles he had addressed to her in the *rôle* of Romeo, and the Prince of Wurtemburg, meeting her at a masked ball, failed to penetrate her disguise, and fell a victim to her charms, which until then had not appeared to him invincible. Whilst on a visit to England, where her first public appearance was made at the opera in the box of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, "the first gentleman in Europe" paid her marked atten-

tion, and indeed wherever she went admiring crowds collected, her portrait was in the shop windows, her name everywhere in print.

On her return to Paris she recommenced holding her receptions. Day by day fresh visitors of note were being added to her large circle of friends; among them Gabriel Legouvé, author of "La Mort d'Abel" and the famous poem "Mérite des Femmes"; the painter Fleury Richard whose picture of Valentine, inspired by words engraved on the tomb at Milan, brought him into fame. He was presented to the beautiful Mme. Regnaud de St. Jean d'Angély, to the Duchesse de Raguse and to the Duchesse d'Abrantes who later described Mme. Récamier's *salon* in the Abbaye-aux-Bois. Bernadotte, the future King of Sweden, was Juliette's faithful friend, and to his instrumentality she owed her father's release from prison where he had been confined in 1802 on a charge of countenancing a secret Royalist correspondence which had been circulating in the South of France. Besides these were Masséna, Moreau, Louis de Narbonne, Lamoignon and Eugène de Beauharnais. Of a more permanent nature were the friendships which existed between Juliette and the famous Montmorency cousins, Adrien, Duc de Laval, and Mathieu, Duc de Montmorency, friend of Mme. de Stael, companion of Lafayette, Lauzun, Ségur, and later intermediary in high places for Juliette's sake on behalf of Chateaubriand. Mme. Récamier's first meeting with the wayward genius took place in 1801, at the house of Mme. de Stael. It was twelve years before they met again, but from this second meeting he became an established influence in her life. "He loved her

as a Psyche in whom he looked at himself," was Lemoinne's comment on Chateaubriand's affection for Mme. Récamier.

The year 1802 marked the zenith of the first period of Juliette's *salon*. She was in the splendour of her social reign, and her receptions were the subject of much discussion and many written accounts. They were described in somewhat grandiose language by Charles Monselet. "Berthaut, the architect, had transformed the house into a veritable fairyland," he wrote in *Portraits après décès*, "it was like a story by Galland solidified," and then he proceeded to discuss the music, the costumes and the guests, amongst whom he saw Mme. Hamelin "with her Cinderella-like foot," Lucien Bonaparte, Fox, Moreau, Mme. Visconti, the thin, pale, fair Mme. de Krudener and the lively Ouvrard. "On Friday at Mme. Récamier's," wrote Maria Edgeworth in November, 1802, "we saw beauty, wealth, fashion, luxury—in a word, a crowd. She herself is a delicious woman, living in the midst of a group of adorers and flatterers, in an atmosphere in which wealth and taste are combined and modern art made more beautiful by ancient art. The centre in which she moves is a strange medley of commercial men and poets, philosophers and parvenus of English, French, Portuguese and Brazilian nationalities."

The most complete and intimate picture of all, however, was given by the German, F. F. Reichardt, former *maître-de-chapelle* under Frederick II., in his *Letters from Paris in 1802 and 1803*. He met Mme. Récamier first at the house of the Marquis Lucchesini. She was dressed in white and gold, and so charmed him that he desired to visit her at the

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AFTER A PAINTING BY MADAME MORIN

first opportunity. When he called at five o'clock in the afternoon he was told by the porter to his surprise that "il ne fait pas encore jour chez Madame". He was present at one of her assemblies, and describes the extremely elegant and tasteful interior of the house. The staircases, hall and ante-chambers were decorated with flowering plants and rare shrubs of all kinds. The ladies were seated on armchairs placed round the *salon* which was very small for the number of people congregated in it, the men passed to and fro behind the chairs of the ladies, chatting to their friends and acquaintances. The centre of the room was reserved for dancing, the figure chosen being a *Française*. Among the best dancers were Jean d'Angély, Mme. Récamier herself, Bildhauer, Dupaty and Vestris, the latter being very conspicuous on account of his extraordinary mode of attire. Among the guests Reichardt particularly noticed Garat the singer, Banker Tourton, the artist Gérard, Camille Jordan, and Junot, the Commandant of Paris, who was dressed in a long blue coat with brown waistcoat and breeches. The reception had begun about midnight; at two o'clock the large *salon* was thrown open and a warm supper was served, at which every imaginable dainty appeared that could be furnished from the resources of sea or river, the forcing-house or the hunt. After receiving some light refreshment at the hands of his delightful hostess, Reichardt took his departure, but this was not the only time he was present at her gatherings, and he stayed in Paris long enough to see them stopped by an official order. At the time of the Consulate Madame Récamier received on Mondays, and her visitors, among whom were many English

people, flocked to the Rue du Mont Blanc in vast numbers. She entertained right royally at Clichy also, but the guests were among the more intimate of her circle. Sainte-Beuve in *Causeries du Lundi* tells of a meeting in her country-house which took place in the summer of 1802 when men of exceedingly different tastes and opinions happened to congregate together, amongst them the Montmorencys, General Moreau, Fox, Erskine and several other distinguished Englishmen besides the two mentioned. "They were altogether and were observing each other," wrote Sainte-Beuve. "Each one tried not to begin the conversation, but M. de Narbonne who was present finally endeavoured to start it. In spite of his intelligence he did not succeed. Mme. Récamier then entered the room, she spoke first to Mr. Fox, said a few words to each of the others, and then introduced every person to each other with a little appropriate praise, and immediately the conversation became general, the natural bond was found."

A typical day at Clichy was one at which the Baronne de V. was present. About midday Narbonne, Camille Jordan, Junot and Bernadotte were announced, then Talma, the actor, and M. de Longchamps, Lamoignan, the Montmorencys and General Moreau, of course, Fox, Lord and Lady Holland, Erskine and Adair. After luncheon and coffee, Eugène de Beauharnais and his friend Philippe de Ségur were added to the guests; a recitation was given by Talma followed by music, Nadermann and Fréderic contributing to this part of the entertainment. Fresh visitors arrived constantly, amongst them the Duchess of Gordon and Lady Georgiana, her daughter, afterwards Duchess of Bedford. M. de

Longchamps recited to the company and Vestris came for the purpose of instructing Juliette in the gavotte to the accompaniment of harp and horn. It is not difficult to picture the graceful performance amidst her admiring guests, to think of her dressed in white as usual, perhaps in satin and fur, to see her beautiful eyes, the play of which she understood to perfection, and note the half-opened lips, the simple brown curls tied back with a plain band of wide black velvet, her complexion so transparent that the blood seemed circulating visibly in her veins ; and something beyond all this, a naïve manner intent on pleasing and being pleased, a recognition of her own acknowledged charm, and the ability to use it to the best advantage, the power to be natural, to enjoy her perfect gifts and to insist that every one else should appreciate them too. It is the more easy to conjure up such a situation because the story of her *salon* is full of them, it is composed of a series of picturesque incidents rather than studies of psychological interest or anecdotes of character ; for such things one must search the annals of a De Stael or a Du Deffand.

At Clichy dinner was served at five and M. Récamier returned from town bringing more guests in his train, among them Lalande, the astronomer, and De Gérando, the philanthropist. After dinner there was a stream of fresh arrivals, the Comte de Markoff, Mme. de Stael, Mme. Viotte, General Marmont and his wife, the Marquis and Marquise Lucchesini. The evening was passed in playing charades and giving recitations and music ; fruit and ices were served and all the visitors left before midnight, for at Clichy the hours were earlier than in town.

At this period of her popularity Juliette slightly compromised herself politically through her friendship and sympathy with some of those who were endeavouring to combat the increasing ambition of Napoleon, among them Camille Jordan, whose pamphlet, *Meaning of the National Vote on the Question of the Consulship for Life*, containing some keen criticisms on the First Consul, was seized before sale, the author narrowly escaping arrest. As Mme. Récamier turned more and more from Bonaparte's friends to associate with his adversaries, she fell from favour, and in February, 1803, her regular Monday receptions were forbidden, ostensibly on account of her close intimacy with General Moreau. At the beginning of the year, as we have seen, Mme. de Stael's banishment had been mooted, and in the autumn became an established fact. This no doubt weighed with Juliette in allowing her sympathies to become markedly in touch with the opposition. In spite of Fouché's solicitations on behalf of Napoleon, she refused to accept a place at Court, and undoubtedly her decision in this respect had an adverse influence upon her husband's affairs at a time when he was endeavouring to stave off impending misfortune.

In 1804 Mme. de Stael was in Switzerland, and the succeeding months saw an ever-growing sympathy between her and Mme. Récamier, whose political opinions were becoming more than ever identified with those of the opposition. During this period Benjamin Constant was in Paris busy with his work on Religion; he became attentive to Juliette and frequently visited her, and mentions in the *Journal Intime* having been present at several *soirées* and

dinners at her house. But the first period of her *salon* was now drawing speedily to a close. The winter of 1806-1807 was a sad one, responsible for her husband's complete ruin and the loss of her mother; the depression caused by these misfortunes, in conjunction with her separation from the author of *Corinne*, lasted for many months. The Récamiers' house in the Rue du Mont Blanc was put up for sale, Juliette retaining a small suite of rooms in it for her personal use, but many months passed before the appearance of a purchaser. In July, 1807, she decided to visit Mme. de Stael at Coppet, and there she met Constant, Schlegel, Auguste de Stael, Middleton, M. de Sabran and Guadet, who wrote a pen-portrait of her. "She affects without dazzling people," he said. "She attracts and keeps her hold, because she does not talk much and her movements are rare and natural." But the guest of Mme. de Stael who possessed the largest share of influence over her life at this time was Prince Augustus of Prussia, nephew of Frederick the Great, and the story of their mutual passion is well known, and culminated in Juliette's request—met by a rebuke—that her husband should agree to a divorce. The correspondence between the lovers lasted until March, 1809, when it slackened, but friendship endured between them until the end.

In September, 1808, the house in the Rue du Mont Blanc was sold, and the Récamiers, in company with M. Bernard and M. Simonard, removed to No. 32 Basse-du-Rampart. After a second visit to Mme. de Stael, first at Lyons, then at Coppet, Juliette returned to Paris in 1810, and gathered round her the illustrious personages of old and new France who,

according to Ballanche in his unpublished *Biographie de Mme. Récamier*, "seemed to come to her in search of a neutral and friendly ground, and more than once even, during this strange time when the greatest destinies were constantly to be seen tottering, kings and princes did not fear to meet there men of every *régime* and of every opinion. In her presence pretensions became inoffensive, and memories lost their bitterness. She received all the vanquished ones, and remained faithful to all those who were oppressed. At her house were to be met the Montmorencys, whose courageous independence has been perpetuated by Mme. de Stael; Camille Jordan, who had already proved himself a noble orator and a generous citizen; the Duc d'Abrantes, brave among the brave; and Bernadotte, the adventurous general who was soon to mount the throne of an adventurous king. . . . The Prince of Orange, at present King of the Netherlands; he who was to be King of Bavaria; the Prince of Mecklenburg, brother of the beautiful Queen of Prussia; Masséna and Prince Eugène continued to frequent a house which had been stripped of all its splendour. The Ministers even of the ruler of the world slipped away from Court and came to refresh themselves in the midst of society which they liked better, and the ruler of the world said bad-temperedly, 'How long has it been the custom for the Council to be held at Mme. Récamier's?'"

But this state of things was not to last. At the end of the year Juliette left Paris for Aix and then joined Mme. de Stael at Chaumont sur Loire. In 1811 she adopted her niece Amélie Cyvoct, later Mme. Lenormant, who published the *Souvenirs et Correspondance* which forms the basis of all bio-

graphical works concerning Mme. Récamier. From this time onwards until her marriage Mlle. Amélie was her aunt's constant companion. From Chaumont sur Loire a move was made to Fossé. Ensuing events and her continued friendship for Mme. de Stael led to Juliette's banishment from Paris, and her subsequent wanderings made an absolute break for the time being in her *salon.* A year of exile was spent at Chalons sur Marne, first at the Hôtel de la Pomme d'Or accompanied by her niece and enlivened by a visit from the Marquise de Catellan, and then domiciled in a flat in the Rue de Cloître, where she was joined in turns by her husband, her father, M. Simonard and her cousin Mme. de Dalmassy. In July, 1812, Juliette moved to Lyons, where she stayed until the spring of 1813. Here she made some new friends, the unfortunate Mme. de Chevreuse, who was to die in exile, and Ballanche, introduced to her by Camille Jordan. The acquaintance resulted on his side in a life-long worship ; according to M. V. de Lafrade she was "the woman who seemed to him like a living apparition of Beatrice". He was at this time thirty-six years of age and had already published the third edition of his *Génie du Christianisme*, his work on *Sentiment* and *Fragments.* Another Lyons friend was André-Marie Ampère, the geometrician, whose son became later a well-known figure at the Abbaye. In the spring of 1813 Juliette left Lyons and, accompanied by Mathieu de Montmorency, journeyed to Chambéry, and from thence to Turin, Alexandria, Parma, Plaisance, Modena, Bologna, and Rome, reaching the latter city in Passion week. Ballanche came to join her, but was speedily recalled by his father, and Juliette left Rome

for Naples, where she was received with open arms by King Joachim and Queen Caroline, better known to her as General and Mme. Murat. From Naples she returned to Rome and renewed her friendship with Canova, who executed a bust of her.

In the year following the aspect of things changed entirely owing to the abdication of Napoleon, and after three years of exiledom Mme. Récamier reached Paris on 18th June, 1814, having been preceded by Mme. de Stael in May. Upon her return her *salon* was soon formed anew, and she received at her own house as formerly. Ballanche informs us that at this time Chateaubriand commenced his readings in her *salon*, the subject being *Les Abencérages*. Mme. de Stael was present, also Bernadotte, Macdonald, the Duke of Wellington, the Duchesse de Luynes, mother of the dead Duchesse de Chevreuse, Camille Jordan, and many notables picked from the best society of half Europe. This was a time of renewed triumph for Juliette. Her husband was once more prosperous in business, and since she had inherited a fortune from her mother, affluence had returned to her. She had horses and carriages, a box at the Opera, and at her daily gatherings such famous personages were present as the Duc de Doudeauville, David, the painter, the Chevalier de Boufflers, Prince Augustus of Prussia, Canova, Sismondi, Pozzo di Borgo and Humboldt, Metternich and Talma, not to mention Constant, whose passion for Juliette—he was one of the most unreasonable of lovers—was soon to make him beside himself. Of these closing scenes of Juliette's youth, Mme. Lenormant wrote: "That was the time when I saw Mme. Récamier really lead a social life, with

all the seduction, the pleasure and the movement that such a life offers. Besides her intimate friends she met Mme. Moreau, Henri de Montmorency, the Marquis de Boisgelin and Mme. de Béranger, the future Mme. Alexis de Noailles, the Marquis de Catellan, Mme. de Boigne, Mme. Bernadotte." Wellington was in Paris and paid her numerous visits which may have pleased her, though they failed to interest. Benjamin Constant's passion was at its height, but his protestations and threats which were unspeakably annoying to her, since she had known him as Mme. de Stael's lover, were fortunately cut short by the interruption which occurred when Napoleon escaped from Elba and the society which had gathered round the Bourbons after the Restoration found it necessary to disperse suddenly. During the Hundred Days Juliette remained in Paris, unwilling to separate from her husband, her father, her remaining friends. After the unsettled times sad events followed fast for her, namely, the death of Murat and the loss of Mme. de Stael, whose last illness ended on 14th July, 1817. "Mme. Récamier is inconsolable," wrote Mme. du Frésnoy to Coulmann. "She came to see me yesterday, and her beautiful eyes filled with such sincere tears that I was touched to the depths of my soul. . . . This pretty woman has so often been accused of coquetry and of frivolity, and yet I saw her given up to so deep a feeling of regret, she expressed in so few words and with such sweetness her sorrow, that more than once it seemed to me all Mme. de Stael's success was not worth as much as such a friendship."

At the deathbed of Mme. de Stael Juliette met again the man who was to be the guiding influence

of her life, René de Chateaubriand, who visited her regularly from this time onward both in the Rue Basse-du-Rempart and the Rue d'Anjou, of which he wrote in his *Mémoires*, "there was a garden, and in the garden a bower of lime-trees, between the leaves of which I could catch a glimpse of moonlight whilst waiting for Mme. Récamier". In 1818 Juliette was at Dieppe and at Aix-la-Chapelle, and both the autumn of that year and the summer of 1819 were spent at the Vallée-aux-Loups, the country house which the Duc de Montmorency had purchased from Chateaubriand.

A second reverse of fortune overtook M. Récamier in this year, and involved the loss of his wife's personal property left to her by her mother. Owing to renewed straitened pecuniary conditions Juliette decided to give up the house in the Rue d'Anjou where she had been settled with M. Simonard, M. Bernard, her husband and her niece and to remove with the latter to the Abbaye-aux-Bois, finding lodgings for the others near by. This convent founded in 1640 by the Annonciades of Bourges had been opened in 1827 as a house of education by some nuns of Notre-Dame, the Canonesses of Saint Augustin, and was one of the few convent-buildings which had the good fortune to escape destruction during the Revolution. The building lay back from the street in the Rue de Sévres, Faubourg, St. Germain, and was guarded by a lofty iron gate surmounted by an iron cross, opening on to the quadrangle, on one side of which was the chapel. Several staircases ascended from this square and led to the apartments inhabited by ladies who wished to enjoy the privilege of retiring into semi-obscurity. Several leaders of society

and women of well-known reputation had sought shelter in this retreat.

When Mme. Récamier first desired to take apartments in the convent only one small suite was vacant, situated on the third storey, with brick flooring and ill-shaped walls and approached by a narrow stairway. "We went to Mme. Récamier's, in her convent, L'Abbaye-aux-Bois, up seventy-eight steps," wrote Maria Edgeworth in 1820; "all came in with the asthma: elegant room and she as elegant as ever. Matthieu de Montmorenci, the ex-Queen of Sweden, Mme. de Boigne, a charming woman, and Mme. la Maréchale de Moreau, a battered beauty, smelling of garlic and screeching in vain to pass for a wit."

In this out-of-the way, incommodious spot Juliette founded the convent *salon* upon which much of her renown rests. The Duchesse d'Abrantes called the place "that little cell in which a woman of more than European reputation came to seek repose and a decent asylum". Chateaubriand gave a full description in his *Mémoires*. "A dark corridor separated two small rooms. I maintained that this vestibule was lit up with a gentle light. The bedroom was furnished with a bookcase, a harp, a piano, a portrait of Mme. de Stael and a view of Coppet by moonlight; pots of flowers adorned the window sills. When, quite breathless with clambering up three flights of stairs, I entered the cell at the fall of the evening I was enraptured. The outlook from the windows was over the garden of the Abbaye, and in the green clumps of trees the nuns moved to and fro and schoolgirls played. The top of an acacia tree rose to the level of the eye. Sharp-pointed steeples pierced the sky, and on the horizon appeared

the hills of Sèvres. The expiring sun gilded the picture and entered through the open window. Mme. Récamier sat at her piano; the Angelus tolled and the sound of the bell 'which seemed to be mourning for the day that was dying,' *il giorno pianger che si muore*, mingled with the last notes of the invocation to night from *Romeo et Juliette* by Stiebelt. A few birds came to nestle in the raised outer blinds; I joined the silence and solitude from afar, above the noise and tumult of a great city . . . peacefulness of heart awaited me in the recesses of that retreat, like the coolness of the woods when one leaves a scorching plain. I recovered my calm beside a woman who spread serenity around her." Sainte-Beuve declared that Juliette "never held a greater place in society than when she was in that humble abode in one of the extremities of Paris". In 1819 the Abbaye-aux-Bois was very little known to fashionable people, but society soon learnt the way to it and the quaint little dwelling-place was invaded by the elect. Juliette never returned the visits of her friends; she preferred to play hostess. Her family party assembled round her at dinner as in earlier days, only a few of her most intimate friends were present at the meal. Mathieu de Montmorency, now Chevalier d'Honneur to the Duchesse d'Angoulême, came to the Abbaye every evening, and, because the duties of his position kept him busy until late, Mme. Récamier arranged that the convent gates, which usually closed at eleven, should remain open until midnight. He was not looked upon askance by the nuns as was Voltaire when he visited Mme. du Deffand at the Convent of St. Joseph.

Chateaubriand paid his daily visit punctually at three

o'clock in the afternoon. Owing to his exclusiveness and reserve no other guests were admitted at this hour without his express consent. He very speedily became the centre of this little world, Juliette abdicating from the position of personal supremacy she had always enjoyed in order to be able the better to minister to his court and direct the movements of the lesser lights that his own might burn the more brightly.

An important addition to the guests of the *salon* was the young Jean-Jacques Ampère, son of the geometrician, on whom Juliette immediately bestowed her friendship. Their first meeting was long to be remembered by him. "It was on New Year's Day that I saw you for the first time," he wrote later. "That moment when I saw you suddenly appear, dressed in white and with a grace such as until then I had never conceived will never leave my memory." Among the friends who witnessed that first meeting were Dugas-Montbel, who visited Juliette later in Italy, Ballanche, Lemontey, who wrote an account of the latter's *Essai sur les Institutions Sociales* for the *Journal du Commerce*, Mathieu de Montmorency, and De Genoude, celebrated for his translations of Isaiah and the Book of Job, and who, according to M. Delphin of Lyons, was responsible for the reading of Lamartine's *Méditations* at the Abbaye in 1819. The friendship between Mme. Récamier and the younger Ampère ripened quickly into passion on his side. In 1820 he naïvely avowed his love for her in her little room in the Abbaye. At this time Juliette was too much taken up by her interest in Chateaubriand to give much attention to the protestations of his boyish

rival, but with her usual tact, and it must be said experience, in such matters she handled Jean-Jacques with delicacy and firmness, and, according to Sainte-Beuve, did "nothing more than to continue to charm him and to calm him gradually without ever curing him". Ampère won the good opinion of Ballanche, the philosopher, who whilst encouraging Mme. Récamier to take an interest in him, said, "He is a young man for whom there is the greatest hope". Undoubtedly he desired to turn Juliette's thoughts somewhat from Chateaubriand, for her enthusiastic friendship for this "king of intelligence," as he termed him, caused both Montmorency and himself much disturbance of mind, probably on account of the risk she ran of being induced to take a more active interest in political affairs, from which it was impossible that Chateaubriand should ever be entirely separated. It was his custom to send her a note every morning and to visit her in the afternoon; in the evening she received all who cared to see her.

At the close of 1820 Chateaubriand was appointed ambassador at Berlin, a post he obtained through the influence of Mathieu de Montmorency, at the instigation of Juliette. After an absence of four months he returned to Paris to receive the State ministry. From the year 1818 and onwards, present or absent, this wayward and erratic genius, this literary politician whom Sainte-Beuve depicted as "never content, always ready to give up what he has undertaken, being from the second day up to his neck in it, and a hundred feet over that, wanting everything and not caring for anything," was the object of Juliette's constant attention. Ballanche held the second place in her affections, De Montmorency may be said to

CHATEAUBRIAND

AFTER A PORTRAIT BY GIRODET-TRIOSON

have occupied the third; both however remained faithful to the end. Constant, on the other hand, had wearied of his ungovernable passion and devoted himself entirely to politics, to publishing pamphlets, and to writing in the *Mercure du xixe siècle*. Camille Jordan was using up his energies in the struggle for liberty. In May, 1821, he died, and Juliette lost in him a staunch friend of earlier days. The following year Chateaubriand was sent as ambassador to England and remained in London until the autumn, when he travelled to Verona for the Congress, his absence giving to young Ampère an apparent opportunity of furthering his own cause with Mme. Récamier. But all in vain, the giving or withholding of favours was no longer in her power, they were already pledged in one quarter, and Jean-Jacques' hopeless passion encouraged him to voice wild words of sentiment. "My work, my projects, my successes, my worries," he wrote at this time, "all belong to you; it is you who have inspired me, consoled me, educated me. I am what I am through you, and I like it to be thus."

During Ampère's absence from Paris at Vauteuil, he was kept informed of all that went on at the Abbaye by Alexis de Jussieu, a friend who sent him regular reports from the *salon*, and who was at Mme. Récamier's one evening when Mlle. Mante recited poetry, Prince Augustus being one of the party.

In 1822 and 1823 the Abbaye-aux-Bois was a refuge for those who were not on the best of terms with a stern Government. Yet in these very years Juliette was gathering around her those literary influences which did much to change the character of her receptions in the third period of her *salon*.

Among the more recent friends she cultivated was Auguste Barbier, author of *Iambes et Poemes* and a pen-portrait of Ballanche, whom he met in 1830 after the July Revolution. A first meeting between Lamartine and Mme. Rècamier took place in 1822 whilst the former was passing through Paris on his way from Rome to London. It was seven years before they met again, and he became a constant guest at her *salon* in its third period, but his first impression of Juliette was recorded by him. He was paying at the time a visit to the Duchess of Devonshire, "the most Mœcenian woman in Europe," as he called her, when a vision of loveliness appeared by her side. "I scarcely had time to see," he wrote, "as one see the groups of stars in a dark sky, a white forehead, bay-coloured hair, a Grecian nose, eyes that had been dipped in the bluish dew of the soul, a mouth the flexible corners of which contracted slightly when she smiled or expanded gravely with feeling; cheeks that were neither tinted nor pale, but like velvet stirred by a constant shiver of autumn air."

It has been said that Mme. Récamier has only been lightly sketched in words, that the flesh-and-blood woman has escaped the pen and defied delineation, that her story is invariably the story of others, and that she never plays her own *rôle* on any stage, but is represented by the opinion of her contemporaries. The truth of such assertions is due not so much to the failure of those who have desired to portray her, as to the woman's exceptional nature, which was serene like a beautiful picture intended to be gazed at with wonder, to be discussed and admired, to be recalled a thousand times and to be worshipped as a memory. It was never stimulated into great

activity or stirred by such emotions as are the fulcrum of great deeds. She preferred others to revel in her gifts of perfect beauty and perfect amiability than to use them for any particular purpose herself. Her life was mapped out by her mother from its commencement, and she never changed its trend, which was to be passive and to attract—at all costs to attract. She was numbered, therefore, amongst those who are content to draw all things to them and find it unnecessary to pursue anything themselves; a beautiful attitude for contemplation, but one which offers few characteristics for portrayal. It was the secret of her success as a hostess and of her failure as a personality apart from her acknowledged charm of presence.

One of the very few whose admiration for Juliette was tempered with disapproval was Prosper Mérimée. He accused her of ugliness, of want of intelligence, of a doubtful reputation and of lacking "the viscus called heart". His remarks concerning her were addressed to the daughter-in-law of William Senior, the critic, and in taking them at their true value it is well to remember the man's professed cynicism and the contemptuous pose he chose to affect. He was first introduced by Ampère and he met Victor Cousin at the Abbaye with whom in later years he grew to be on terms of friendship. Although a constant visitor in Juliette's *salon* Mérimée chose to make fun of the way in which she organised her receptions. Whereas she had formerly held noisy and crowded *fêtes* she now planned out her arrangements with almost too great an exactitude. Five or six circles of chairs were formed, each one at some distance from the others. The lady visitors

were seated, the men moved round them, mingling the groups to some extent, although by Juliette's desire only those whose tastes were similar were brought into close communion, and the whole proceeding was qualified by her evident anxiety to show deference to Chateaubriand in whose honour these *soirées* took place. Lamartine considered "the arrangement and the etiquette classified the various ranks too much," and he likened the *salon* to "a monarchy," and again to a Court, an old Court, for "the furniture was simple and worn; there were a few books scattered about on the side-tables, a few busts of the time of the Empire on the brackets, a few screens of the Louis XV. century were the only things in the way of ornament".

It was not until 1825 that Juliette's receptions became thus stereotyped in form. For two years she had been in Rome and Naples, her long sojourn there being occasioned ostensibly by her anxiety with regard to Mlle. Cyvoct's health, but much more probably by the disturbing influences and stormy agitation caused her by the mutual passion which existed between herself and Chateaubriand. She had now been accommodated with a larger suite of rooms on the ground floor at the Abbaye and was thus enabled to extend her circle considerably. Delécluze was frequently her guest, and amongst the people he met were M. de Castellane, Charles Lenormant, presently to become the husband of Mlle. Cyvoct, the Duchesse de Raguse, the Comtesse d'Hautpool, "a wit, a poetess, painfully ugly," M. de Kératry, Mme. de Grammont, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld and his son, Mathieu de Montmorency and Ampère *père*. Mlle. Mante of the Théâtre Français discussed

the stage and the influence of Talma; M. de Catellan, Kératry and Benjamin Constant devoted their conversation to politics; sometimes there was music, sometimes reading; J. J. Ampère or Delphine Gay occasionally recited poetry. Honoré de Balzac, a young, thick-set man with a common face but an animated expression and a "delighted look that reminded one of Rabelais," was introduced into the circle by the Duchesse d'Abrantes. The gatherings were becoming more and more animated, more and more literary, ever less political. The hostess declared her drawing-room to be neutral ground, but she never dreamed of excluding from her society such influential people at Court as the Montmorencys, the La Rochefoucaulds, in short, any one whose personal friendship she had proved to be sincere.

At this time readings commenced of the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, which caused the whole audience to be deeply moved, "it seemed as though the author himself was also, for he had to wipe tears away". From thenceforward Chateaubriand was the "star of great splendour," and his works, published or unpublished, formed the larger part of the literary fare in Juliette's *salon*.

In 1826 the first breach was made in the circle of intimates through the death of Mathieu de Montmorency, which occurred during the service at the Church of St. Thomas d'Aquin on Good Friday. The Duc de Doudeauville, himself a frequent visitor at Mme. Récamier's, pronounced the eulogium on her valued friend. Brillat-Savarin, Juliette's connection by marriage, and author of the witty *Physiologie du Gout*, and Talma, who had frequently recited at her *soirées*, both died during the year, but

in spite of these and subsequent losses, the *salon* flourished throughout 1827; Ballanche remaining its steady stay and prop, Chateaubriand the erratic genius who saved it from stagnation. In 1828 the latter was despatched to the Embassy at Rome and Juliette remained in Paris mourning the death of her father, the absence of Lenormant, and only enlivened by the correspondence she carried on with Chateaubriand. The latter returned to France in 1830, on the eve of the Revolution, and the Abbaye-aux-Bois revived from a temporary torpidity and developed a new and what was to prove its final stage of brilliancy. Fresh blood was brought in to fill up the gaps which death and absence had caused in the old circle, rising men, new stars in the firmament of literature and art, foregathered with those of an older generation, among them Victor Cousin, Villemain, Henri de Latouche, author of *Fragoletta;* Valéry, the traveller; Dubois, founder of the *Globe;* Saint-Marc Girardin, still young, already famous and three times laureate of the Academy; Gérard, painter of "L'Extase de Sainte Thérèse" and "L'Espérance". Those with political interests were Doudeauville, the Duc de Broglie, the Comte de Sainte-Aulaire, an advocate of Constitutional Monarchy, the future Ambassador to Turin, Prosper de Barante, and Baron Pasquier who organised a campaign in the Chamber of Peers against reactionary measures; and some of their womenfolk, Mlle. de Sainte-Aulaire, Mme. et Mlles. de Barante, also Mme. de Fontanes, Mme. Appony, Mme. de Boigne, Mme. de Grammont and the mother of Delphine Gay, who are all mentioned in a letter from Ballanche to Mme. Lenormant written in June, 1829, as having been

present at the reading of Chateaubriand's tragedy *Moïse*. A fuller account was given by Lamartine in his *Cours familier de Littérature* and by Latouche in an article in the *Revue de Paris*. "All the glory and all the charm of France" were invited to hear Lafond, actor of the Comédie Française, who was chosen to read. The first act of the play was delivered satisfactorily, but when he came to the second, Lafond, who had not sufficiently studied *Moïse*, was heard to hesitate and falter. The author was himself present, and, unable to endure a style of declamation which rendered his work unintelligible to the audience, finally took the manuscript himself and completed the reading to the delight of every one present.

Shortly after this occasion Juliette left for Dieppe with M. Ballanche, and Chateaubriand went to Cauterets. She wrote to Mme. Lenormant in August, 1829: "I am here in the midst of *fêtes*, princesses, illuminations, spectacles; two of my windows face the ballroom, and the other two the theatre. In the midst of all this bustle I am in perfect solitude: I sit on the sea-shore and dream; review all the sad and happy events in my life. I trust that you will be happier than I have been." There is a sad note underlying these words, which is also occasionally to be found elsewhere in Juliette's rare letters, and which almost comes as a surprise to those who view her life as untroubled by external happenings. Perhaps her serenity has been emphasised by the fact that she wrote little, that she disguised her inward feelings even to those nearest her, and that she desired always to appear at ease and to the best possible advantage.

In January, 1830, Edgar Quinet, author of *La Grèce Moderne*, joined the *salon*, paying his visits on Fridays, one of her three recognised weekly receptions. In March of the same year M. Récamier died and Juliette returned to Dieppe in the early summer and was joined there by Chateaubriand, who arrived only a few hours before the announcement of the Decrees which preceded the Revolution. He hastened back to Paris, followed almost immediately by Mme. Récamier, who was anxious concerning her friends. During the exciting months which followed the Abbaye became a kind of centre of information, the latest news being quickly despatched thither, and several of Juliette's friends, among them the Duchesse d'Abrantes, paid two or three visits a day in order to learn what was taking place in the outside world.

Meanwhile personal troubles were burdening Mme. Récamier's mind. She was grieved by the death of Benjamin Constant, which occurred on the 8th of December of this year, and the private and public affairs of Chateaubriand, into which she entered with all her heart, where at this time of a nature to cause her acute distress. He returned from a stay in Switzerland in 1831, and held a firmer place than before in her esteem and affection. "M. de Chateaubriand," wrote Sainte-Beuve in the *Causeries du Lundi*, "during the last twenty years was the great centre of her world, the great interest of her life, the man to whom I will not say that she sacrificed every one else (for she never sacrificed any one but herself), but to whom she subordinated every one. He had his antipathies, his aversions, and even his bitternesses, to which the *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* testify sufficiently. She tempered and corrected all that.

Every day she had a thousand graceful inventions for renewing and refreshing praise. She beat up fresh friends and admirers from everywhere. She chained us all to the feet of her statue with a golden chain."

This passage must be taken as significant; it throws light not only on the extraordinary vitality which held Juliette's *salon* together till the end, but it explains her activity in collecting round her new faces, fresh intellects, unexploited genius at a day when she might have been forgiven for preferring old friends to new, and might reasonably have shrunk from the task of introducing young and untried spirits into an atmosphere which had become familiar and homelike through long usage. To the last, for the sake of the man she honoured before all others, she endeavoured to maintain, at whatever cost to herself, an ever-flowing stream of thought and culture, an audience which might bring new ideas, new points of view, fresh homage to lay at the feet of the one who was greatest amongst them all.

Amongst the new-comers who were welcomed to the *salon* at this period were Gustave Drouineau, author of *Ernest ou les Travers du Siècle* and other Neo-Christian novels; Elisa Mercœur, whose first collection of poems, published by her at the age of eighteen, was extolled by Lamartine, and the Duc de Noailles, accompanied by several members of his family. Of the latter gentleman Juliette said "he was the last and the youngest of those to whom she had accorded the title of a true friend".

Her efforts on the behalf of Chateaubriand were not in vain. From this time forward he abandoned his melancholy manner to some extent, and became more genial towards other visitors, conversing freely

with them and allowing himself to be drawn into pleasant discussion. He renewed an old acquaintance with Lamenais which blossomed forth into an intimate friendship.

A break in the Abbaye gatherings was caused in 1832 by the arrest of Chateaubriand, who was accused of plotting against the safety of the State. He was speedily released and took his immediate departure from Paris. In company with his wife he travelled to Switzerland, where Juliette followed. This break lasted until 1834 when the celebrated *soirées* were organised at which the *Mémoires* were read to a small and select audience. M. Ed. Biré gives an account of these readings in the Introduction to his edition of the *Mémoires*, in which he says the assembly was composed of a dozen persons only, including representatives of old France and often of new France. He mentions by name the old friends, La Rochefoucauld, Montmorency, Doudeauville, the Duc de Noailles, Ballanche, Sainte-Beuve, Quinet, the Abbé Gerbet, M. Dubois, Léonce de Lavergne, J. J. Ampère, Lenormant, Mme. Amable Tastu and Mme. A. Dupin. The meetings took place about two o'clock on consecutive afternoons; Ampère or Lenormant read from the manuscript which Chateaubriand produced carefully enveloped in a silk handkerchief. These readings became historic and were quoted and discussed in the press. Sainte-Beuve was among the first of those to be permitted the privilege of listening to the *Mémoires* "of the most illustrious living man, who was himself present in that small *salon*, which was sparsely enough but at the same time worthily enough filled to make one feel proud to be of the circle of the chosen".

In spite of the fact that in 1835 when she had reached the age of fifty-eight Mme. Récamier's health was failing and her eyesight was weak, she still welcomed new visitors, amongst them Charles Briffaut, J. J. Ampère's intimate friend Ozandu, Alexis de Tocqueville, author of *Démocratie en Amérique* and *Forbin-Janson*, who "helped to make the Abbaye appear like a hospital," for he had to be carried by a servant and looked "like a veritable ruin, a shadow, or a dead person". The readings continued, Mrs. Trollope being one of seventeen guests present on one occasion. After an interval during which Juliette visited Dieppe and the Château of Maintenon, the country seat of the Duc de Noailles, the *salon* met again in the Abbaye in September.

Sainte-Beuve's account of an interview at which both Chateaubriand and Lamartine were present is a typical example of Juliette's difficulties in smoothing down the susceptibilities of the most exacting of her guests. The occurrence took place in 1836, immediately after the publication of *Jocelyn*. Mme. Récamier opened the conversation by addressing its author. "I am reading your book, monsieur," she said to Lamartine; "we are reading it and it has given us a great deal of pleasure; M. de Chateaubriand especially is very much charmed with it." Chateaubriand, however, refused to echo this praise, remaining morosely silent. Juliette redoubled her efforts in order that his lack of enthusiasm might appear less patent. She discussed the style of the work in detail and, drawing out its author, induced him to utter a meed of self-praise to which he was little loth, declaring it to be without flaws as he had examined it carefully "with a magnifying glass".

Then he took his departure, and Chateaubriand, who had until then remained a sullen spectator of the episode, uttered his first comment. Ignoring the presence of Sainte-Beuve and his hostess, in a perfectly audible tone he exclaimed, "The great booby!"

Again Mme. Récamier was absent from Paris and her friends gathered round her first at Maintenon and then at Montigny, the Duc de Laval's estate. The death of this latter steadfast friend occurred on the 16th of June, 1837, and Juliette's grief was acute. In spite of this, however, and her continued ill-health, readings at the Abbaye were frequent in 1837. In November Quinet gave the third part of his *Prométhée* to the assembled audience, and his description of the occasion is all the more interesting because it is one of the last of its kind. "She was lying down on a sofa to my right," he wrote of Juliette in *Lettres à sa Mère*. "She was as beautiful and well-dressed as usual, but she could only talk with her lips. At the corner of the mantelpiece was M. de Chateaubriand, another wreck just as magnificent. A niece of Mme. Récamier's and the two intimate friends, Ballanche and Ampère, were also there. Then, too, there was another person, who among these fine ruins looked like one of the black dwarfs in the pictures by Rubens. In such choice society I expected some politenesses, and my expectations were realised. The only thing which touched me was to hear, later on, that M. de Chateaubriand said afterwards he was convinced that *Prométhée* was the best of my works. Mme. Récamier seemed to be fairly affected by it and edified, and the reader withdrew satisfied with the incense and smoke." Sainte-Beuve, in letters ad-

dressed to M. and Mme. Juste Olivier on 10th and 18th June, 1838, mentions the Abbaye, "where," he says, "they are all happy, pleasant, and young, from four to six o'clock". On the 17th he describes a brilliant assembly, among those present being Chateaubriand, Ballanche, Ampère, Mme. Salvage, friend and legatee of Queen Hortense, the Duchesse de Raguse, M. Briffaut of the Academy and the Duc de Noailles. At one of the readings Sainte-Beuve's preliminary speech, introducing his lectures at Lausanne, was read after its publication in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and found favour in the eyes of all.

During the winter of 1837 Mme. Récamier, who was ill and weary of the Abbaye, accepted the use of Pasquier's house in the Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré. In 1838, however, a return was made to the convent and Delécluze gave a reading of the first chapters of his *David, son Ecole et son Temps*. On this occasion a slight contretemps occurred. His work contained a reference to death on the guillotine, and among those present were several guests who had lost friends and relatives during the Revolution in this manner. Becoming aware of the sensation his unfortunate theme was causing, he attempted to shorten the obnoxious passage, grew confused and lost the thread of his story. Unpleasantness of a different nature occurred at the reading by Sainte-Beuve of his notice of the works of Fontanes, when a slight disagreement arose between the critic and Mme. de Fontanes, who took exception to some of his remarks. Mme. Récamier and Chateaubriand did everything possible to bring about a reconciliation of differences, and a compromise was arrived at by which the passages in question were published

in Sainte-Beuve's article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* but were omitted in the edition of Fontanes' works. Readings were continued during the winter of 1839 and spring of 1840, in which year Juliette left Paris for Ems in order to undergo treatment for her throat which was at this time the cause of much suffering. She returned to Paris in the autumn, and organised a subscription *soirée* on behalf of the citizens of Lyons, her native city having been inundated by an overflow from the Rhône, a great misfortune for its inhabitants. This function was a tremendous success. Lady Byron was present, and the famous actress Rachel recited the prayer from *Esther* and a scene from *Polyeucte*. M. de Marcelles was a guest on this occasion and described the effect caused on the assembly by the power of the great *tragedienne*. "Very much affected, but with slow movements on account of his age, M. de Chateaubriand got up on his trembling legs and, approaching the admirable actress, said to her in a feeble voice, 'What a grief it is to see anything so beautiful come to life just as one is about to die!' 'But, Monsieur le Vicomte,' replied Rachel in an animated and fervent tone, as though continuing her prayer, 'there are men who do not die.'"

In 1841 one of the last of its guests was added to the familiar little circle at the Abbaye. This was Louis de Loménie, who married Mlle. Lenormant, thus becoming Mme. Récamier's grand-nephew. His work, the *Galerie des contemporains illustres, par un homme de rien*, awakened the interest of Chateaubriand, always a sufficient passport to Juliette's favour. The time had come, however, when even such a credential would be useless. Her gath-

erings were drawing speedily to their close. Juliette was severely ill, Chateaubriand barely less so. The death of Prince Augustus, who to the last retained a feeling of friendship for her which bound him "by the most beautiful memories," took place in 1843 and occasioned grief which in her weakened condition of health was barely supportable.

In this year M. Delphin, Juliette's nephew, visited the *salon* which his father had quitted almost thirty years previously. His pen was responsible for one of the last pictures of the far-famed assemblies. "The Abbaye," he wrote, "had still the same severity of manner, but as a set-off to this a great reserve and a certain indulgence, due to a profound sentiment of what conscience owes to honest and generous convictions. There was a great deal of reverence." Herriot in *Madame Récamier et ses Amis* expresses almost the same thought. "Right to the very end the presence of a woman 'holy through her tenderness' kept up that indulgence, that gentleness of manner which soothed the last hours of men like Chateaubriand and Ballanche, and rendered them almost unconscious of the passage from life to death." Such passages express the flickering of the dying light, the change from the vigour and vitality of a reception where all was turmoil and movement, to the subdued hush and murmur of voices repeating great thoughts, and in patience clinging to their meaning and beauty until even beautiful sentiments merge into the peace which comes with the last sleep. So Juliette's *salon* faded out, and with it all other *salons*, for the hour had struck when life had more feverish uses than devotion to the art of intercourse in its most polished social aspect.

After the death of his wife in 1847, Chateaubriand asked Madame Récamier to share his name, but this honour she refused. Indeed she was busily devoted to poor faithful Ballanche whose death occurred on the 12th of June, and by whose bedside she watched with tender care. Several members of the Abbaye were present at his funeral. Towards the end of the same year readings of the *Mémoires* were repeated in Chateaubriand's room in the Rue du Bac. Juliette went to these in company with the Comtesse de Caffarelli, whose friendship for her commenced after the death of Mme. Chateaubriand. The announcement of the Republic in 1848 was made to Chateaubriand as he lay practically on his deathbed, so feeble that he barely realised its importance. His death, which occurred on 4th July, crushed the spirit of the woman who had made it the object of her life to guard his interests, and she never recovered vitality, but for months survived with every faculty impaired. In May, 1849, whilst staying at her niece's house, she was attacked by cholera, then raging in Paris, and she died on the 11th of the month, following her old friends into the peace she had earnestly desired.

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